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ABSTRACT

The Commission on the Status of Women section of the Proceedings contains the following five papers: "Women as Sources: Gender Patterns in Framing the News" (Lynn M. Zoch and Judy VanSlyke Turk); "Gender Bias in Newspaper Coverage of the 1996 Olympic Games: A Content Analysis of Five Major Dailies" (Katherine N. Kinnick); "Evaluating the Public Information Function: How Media Agents Framed the Silicone Breast Implant Controversy" (Julie Andsager and Leiott Smiley); "Cyber-Wimmin: Co-Opting the Dominant Discourse" (B. Carol Eaton); and "How Do Our Daughters Grow?: Adolescent Socialization Messages in Selected Print and Electronic Media" (Betsy Robertson). Individual papers contain references. (RS)

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR EDUCATION IN JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION (80th, Chicago, Illinois, July 30-August 2, 1997):

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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Women as Sources:

Gender Patterns in Framing the News

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Abstract

Women as Sources:
Gender Patterns in Framing the News

This paper examines the degree to which the local media frame includes women as legitimized news sources, and the degree to which the sex of the reporter affects that choice. Through quantitative and qualitative content analysis of news stories in a medium-market daily over the period of a decade, the researchers examine the extent to which women exert power over news by serving as information sources. Findings indicate the view presented by the media is that news is made and information controlled almost exclusively by men acting in an official capacity.

The media of mass communication are among our most powerful social institutions, with the capacity to set the public agenda by attaching salience to particular issues and events and then presenting those issues in their content. An important dimension of agenda-setting is the way in which the media frame the issues and events they present to the public. This paper focuses on one of the most important dimensions of framing: choice of information source, that is, the selections journalists make from among the many possible and potential holders of information of those sources whose information and viewpoints will actually be included in the news. In particular, this paper focuses on the inclusion of female sources in newspaper stories.

A recent study by the Freedom Forum indicates that women are seldom used as sources for stories of national or international importance, but rather are quoted as victims or because of their relationship with a male who is central to the story. The study also found that female reporters were no more likely than their male colleagues to quote other women.[1] Thus, this research focuses on gender as a primary variable not only of source but of reporter. Finally, the paper explores the connection between the holder of information and power: the absence of women as sources would reflect their powerlessness, their symbolic annihilation by the media.[2]

Review of the Literature

Agenda Setting. The media clearly are more than a mirror of or conduit for the concerns and issues of others. There is significant research support for an agenda-setting model: that the public learns both facts and the salience of those facts from the media. The literature supports the belief that public perceptions and opinions toward issues/topics and the individuals who espouse those issues are shaped by the media, leading the public to view certain issues/topics as more important than others.[3]

The media, "in the process of transmitting others' concerns and issues. . . reworks and translates them to focus attention and structure cognitions."[4] From the array of available information, the media select for dissemination those pieces of information reporters and editors think are important. What the media report as news is the **media's** agenda of salient information, what the **media** think their audiences should know. As Bernard Cohen writes, "The press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion. It may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about."[5]

While the media are not the only influence upon our sense of what's important in our environment, the media do play a central role. As Walter Lippman noted, "Universally it is admitted that the press is the chief means of contact with the unseen environment. And practically everywhere it is assumed that the press should do spontaneously for us what primitive democracy imagined each of us could do spontaneously for himself, that every day and twice a day it will present us with a true picture of the outer world in which we are interested."[6] But the world the public sees through the media's eyes is not an objective account of events, people, places and issues. "While news may be viewed as a window on the world through which Americans learn of their institutions and their leaders, it is a window that reflects largely the media's own construction of reality."[7]

If the media does indeed pass along its construction of reality, its own agenda of what is important, the question then becomes who sets the media's agenda? While the personal values of individuals working for media organizations may influence their decisions as to what does or doesn't get on the agenda of salient, important "news" that is presented, "the conventions of the media for which they work seem to play at least some role in shaping the media agenda."[8] But as Turk notes: "The sources of the raw material of information upon which journalists rely and from which they choose what to use may ultimately have as much to do with

the media's agenda as the selection processes of the journalists themselves. News is not necessarily what happens but what a news source says has happened because the news doesn't 'happen' until there is an exchange of information" between journalists and their sources.[9]

Framing the media agenda. A frame is defined as a "schemata of interpretation" which allows an individual to make sense of information or an occurence.[10] The media give their audiences frames to organize and facilitate understanding. "(F)rames select and call attention to particular aspects of the reality described, which logically means that frames simultaneously direct attention away from other aspects."[11]

In an article that focuses on political campaigns, Williams, Shapiro and Cutbirth point out both the importance and the dangers to news consumers of this framing the news:

> "The reason why framing is potentially important to the understanding of the agenda-setting process is that often the media communicate issues relevant to a campaign but do not give an implicit campaign frame. The result is that the audience must decide if issues are relevant or irrelevant to the campaign. If the media provide a campaign frame, then the consumer knows the linkage to the candidates or the electoral process. If the media do not provide a campaign frame, then the viewer-reader is left with ambiguities as to the campaign relevance of the story."[12]

They also note the importance of various other message variables in addition to content -- such as source attribution and placement of stories -- in the framing of a story.[13]

Kosicki and Pan add to that list of framing variables when they suggest that "media also have effects on the way issues are framed through the choices of journalists, institutional traditions and workways, occupational norms and values, and actions of policymakers who may be chosen as sources."[14]

In the context of this paper, the main variable of concern in the way the media frame a story is the choice of sources. When a source is a woman, the interaction of topic and status of source also are of concern in identifying the role of the female source within the context of the story. It should also be remembered that it is individual reporters who pick sources, decide what questions to ask, which quotations to use and which to ignore, and what tone the story should take.[15] Thus how the gender of the writer affects the choice of source, and how much information is attributed to the source, also is considered important in this study.

Preference in Use of News Sources. Official sources, such as government officials or police, are often preferred by journalists.[16] "The effect of this official, organizationally-linked news is that the information which people take away from their media encounters represents a relatively small range of source-defined alternatives. Critical approach scholars have long argued that by focusing on elites, the mass media tend to reinforce the dominant ideology."[17] This heavy reliance on official sources tends to legitimize the power structure in society. "News stories reify the world for both news consumers and journalists. Reification means that what is essentially a product of human creation is perceived as being a fact."[18]

"Indeed, news can be considered a product of one bureaucracy gathered from other bureaucracies. . .In addition to just having their news regulated by sources, journalists have information structured for them by other bureaucracies. . ."[19] and there is a corresponding lack of non-institutionalized news sources to balance the official views.[20]

While some sources see it in their best interests to avoid news coverage, people with information more frequently attempt to create news stories that meet journalists' news needs. Sources therefore "subsidize" journalists' costs of gathering and reporting information in order to increase their chances of being covered.[21] Typically, more than half of all news stories originate from sources' subsidization efforts to have their voices heard in the mass media. [22] And, because "journalists

must learn to do their jobs efficiently," they may apply "strategies that virtually assure their efforts will bring back a story."[23] A common strategy of the time-pressed journalist is to rely on source-originated news about planned events and on pre-arranged news sources such as news releases, news conferences or official proceedings. Journalists, trying to make their information gathering efficient, therefore gravitate to government officials because they make information readily available. This then encourages the reporter to see the world from an "official" point of view through "official" files and records of "official" proceedings of "official" agencies."[24]

Shoemaker and Reese write that "(s)ources have a tremendous effect on mass media content, because journalists can't include in their news reports what they don't know. . . (sources) may also influence the news in subtle ways by providing the context within which all other information is evaluated... and by monopolizing the journalists' time so that they don't have an opportunity to seek out sources with alternative views."[25]

Research shows that reporters repeatedly go to sources who are like themselves. And journalists tend not to select or to quote sources who refute their own ideas. [26] Stempel and Culbertson suggest that a source's assertiveness, credibility (as determined by the journalist), accessibility and quotability can affect both a source's prominence (frequency of mention) and dominance (tendency to be quoted rather than paraphrased or just written about) in news coverage.[27]

Of course journalists "not only talk with those who are directly involved (in news events), but they may also get information from sources only indirectly associated with the event or reactions and opinions from 'people on the street.' But not all sources are equally likely to be contacted by journalists -- those with economic or political power are more likely to influence news reports than those who lack power."[28]

Herbert Gans argues that heavy reliance by media on officials representing both government and private-sector entities presents a very specific (official) picture

of society and its institutions.[29] How reporters gather news and the types of sources they use are important because in framing that picture journalists determine not only what information is presented to the public but what images of society are presented.[30]

Women and the Power of News Sources. It is an unreal image of society that is presented when women, who represent 52 percent of our population, are relatively absent as news sources. And it is an unreal image presented when women are rarely quoted on issues of national or international importance, or are seldom quoted on the front page of a newspaper like *The New York Times*.[31] The issue of women as news sources, and the media-presented image of power and legitimacy associated with those sources, is another area of examination in this study.

Brown et al, in a content analysis of six newspapers of varying sizes, found that of the roughly 50 percent of all sources who were identifiable by sex, barely 10 percent were women. "Women are badly under-represented, regardless of story origin," the research concluded.[32] Although not the medium of interest in this study, it is interesting to note that two decades ago two studies of network television news reported similarly low percentages: in 1977, 15 percent of sources were identified as women, and in 1979 there was a drop to 7 percent women as news sources.[33]

Another study of breaking news coverage in large newspapers revealed that quoted sources were 76 percent male, 15 percent female and the rest of unknown gender. "The overwhelming presence of male authorities/officials in these breaking news stories is consistent with long-standing findings about the underrepresentation of women as newsmakers," the study concluded. [34]

Reporters often give time pressure as a reason for lack of diversity in news sources. They contend that the availability of a source is sometimes the most important criterion to choice of that source.[35] Other research has shown that

newsgathering routines and peer group pressure within a new organization can affect a reporter's use of sources.[36]

One reason "elites" are used so often as sources, according to Brown and her research team, is that "(T)hey are most likely to meet the availability criterion through their powers to attract journalists' attention ... and through their geographic and social proximity to journalists. Elites also are better able to meet the criterion of suitability. Due to their centrality in power systems, they can supply a great deal of information without unduly taxing their organizations or the resources of journalists. They also are more likely to meet standard definitions of reliability, trustworthiness, authoritativeness and articulateness."[37]

Manoff and Schudson suggest that by convention, "reporters choose authoritative sources over other potential sources. But what makes a source authoritative? With the rise of the beat system, authoritativeness came to be identified with the ability to exercise authority in important political and social institutions. Presidents and governors, the heads of corporations and other private bodies, and those designated to speak in their behalf were all judged to be authoritative sources. . . The convention of authoritativeness has so strong a hold on journalists that they will take the word of a senior official over that of subordinates who may be in a better position to know. . ."[38]

Ferguson maintains that women are often left out of this authoritative elite because of a consensual myth about the role of women in society that the media both buys into and perpetuates. She writes:

> "I have argued that the seeds of the fallacy are contained in assumptions about the *correlation* between the way women are presented as powerful or powerless in media content, the extent to which women inside the cultural industries do or do not exercise control over that content; and the impact of these images and processes on the relative power or powerlessness of women in the social order."[39]

The reporter's use of sources creates a representation to the reader of who has information important enough to cite in the news story. In this way news is a representation of power and authority within the society.[40] Feminist researchers believe that the inequitable distribution of power between men and women creates a system where women "lose their voices" and become, in effect, "invisible."[41] Perhaps they are invisible, too, to reporters searching for sources.

Within an organizational context the control of information as a key resource is an accepted method to gain power, and certain individuals gain both power and visibility by appearing to be "in the know." The more scarce the information or knowledge, the harder it is for most people to gain access to it, and the more power accrues to the holder of that information.[42] Within the context of the media, information or "news" indicates to the reader who is in possession of knowledge that is important enough to report. "At the same time that it informs about who are the authorized knowers, it suggests, by relegation to a minor role and by omission, who is excluded from having a say in important matters."[43]

Development of Research Questions

From the review of the literature, several research questions emerged that linked framing, source role in framing, and gender of both journalist and source. These questions could be tested in a study that would serve as a pilot for a larger-scale analysis of news sources. A pilot study would permit later refinement of the research questions and methodology as well as enable the researchers to gather reportable data from a small sample of news stories.

The research questions examined in the pilot study were:

1) Do journalists still favor official sources of information in their reporting of the news, as the literature indicates has traditionally been the case?[44]

2) Are the sources, and especially the official sources, upon whom journalists rely still predominantly male, as has been the finding in past studies?

3) Does the gender of the reporter make a difference in this tendency to rely upon official sources? Are male and female journalists equally likely to rely on official sources?

4) Does the gender of the reporter make a difference in the extent to which women are used as sources? Are male and female journalists equally likely to use women as sources?

5) If journalists are, indeed, heavily dependent upon official sources, how does this affect the media's construction of reality, the "worldview" presented to media audiences and consumers? Is the "reality" the media present an official male reality because male bylines continue to dominate news columns and because male sources continue to provide the majority of the information subsidies to journalists?

Methodology

A sample of stories published between 1986 and 1996 on the front pages of the "A" (first section) and "B" (metro/local) sections of a mid-sized[45] daily newspaper in the southeast that is part of the Knight-Ridder chain were analyzed in this pilot study.

Even-numbered years were sampled, alternating between even-numbered and odd-numbered months, i.e. for 1986, the months of February, April, June , August, October and December were selected and for 1988, the odd-numbered months of January, March, May, July, September and November were selected. The 1986 pattern was repeated in 1990 and 1994, and the 1988 pattern was repeated in 1992 and for the first three months of 1996, the only months of that year to be included in the sample.

The newspaper published on the first day of the selected month was chosen, and all stories on the front page of the "A" and "B" sections of those issues, including the jump of those stories continued onto a subsequent page, were analyzed. Selecting the first day of the month provided a sample that represented all seven days of the week.

Excluded from the analysis were promotional "teasers" directing readers to stories inside the paper, and the paper's daily listing of deaths throughout the state that appears as a standing column across the bottom of the front page of the "A" section.

This sampling method yielded a total of 398 stories representing those published between 1986 and 1996.[46]

The unit of analysis was the news story. Information coded for each story included:

(1) date and year of publication;

(2) placement variables (page, column width of headline, location on the page, length of story and use of photo or other illustration);

(3) topic covered and its scope (international, national, state or local). Topics were selected based on a review of the newspaper content analysis literature.[47] Those coded in this pilot study were governance, courts, crime, military, education, business/finance, culture, religion, health/medicine/science, election campaigns and news features on unusual people or events. An "other" category was maintained for stories that did not fit one of the topic categories;

(4) variables on the source of the story (whether the story was generated by staff or wire service, if it was bylined or not and gender of the byline if one was used);

(5) number and identification of sources to whom information in the story was attributed. For each attribution, coders recorded whether the source was identified by name, the gender of the source, any organizational or official title used

for the source, any identification of the source's employer or the organization the source represented and the length of the material attributed to the source. Length was measured in picas because that is currently the dominant measure used in the newspaper industry.

The coding manual was pre-tested extensively and revised several times before coding began to increase intercoder and intracoder reliability. Intercoder reliability also was enhanced by limiting the coding to only four individuals, the two researchers and two graduate students trained by the researchers. Intercoder reliability across the four coders was .83 and intracoder reliability averaged .92, both of which the researchers deemed acceptable for this pilot study.

Findings and Discussion

Data on the Stories. Almost three-quarters (71.29%) of the 398 stories analyzed were news stories, while 28.72 percent were features.[48]

Slightly more than one-third (37.20%) of the stories were accompanied by a mug shot photo (17.10%) or other photo, chart or graphic (20.10%). Another 26 "stories" (6.50%) were actually visuals with cutline or caption that appeared alone, without a written story.

Slightly more stories appeared on the front page of the "B" (metro/local) section -- 208, or 52.26 percent-- than appeared on the "A" section front page (190, 47.74%). More than three-quarters (77.7%) of the total stories in both sections jumped (were continued) to another page, usually in the same section of the paper as the beginning of the story.

Treatment of stories varied somewhat by section of the paper in which a story appeared. For instance, the number of stories that were accompanied by a photo, graphic or other visual was slightly greater in section A than in section B. That is perhaps not surprising since among the widely-accepted journalistic practices intended to "grade" a story's importance is to use a photo or other graphic device

such as a longer or larger-type headline to call greater attention to a story, thus signaling its importance. Placing a story in the "A" section of a newspaper sends a similar signal of importance. [49] Thus these stories given both "A" section and photo treatment are clearly being graded as among the most important in the newspaper.

The largest number of stories (149, or 37.44%) were local stories, dealing with city, town, village or county topics and issues. Given the United States' tradition of local, "home town" newspapering, with most newspapers clearly identified with and circulating within a particular community, that local emphasis was not surprising.

Approximately three stories in 10 (118, or 29.65%) focused on statewide topics or issues. Another 55 (13.82%) were national, and slightly more than 10 percent (42, or 10.55%) were international in scope. A few stories (34, or 8.54%) were categorized as "mixed" because they were not limited to just one geographic focus; for instance, several stories dealt with the local impact of national or international events.

Governance topics -- information about federal, state or local government agency business, and actions of Presidents, governors, legislators and mayors -- dominated the news. The largest number of stories, more than one in five (21.48%), were about governance. Crime news was second in frequency (12.28%), while the courts, the military, education, business, health/medicine/science and culture each accounted for between five and 10 percent of the total number of stories. Religious topics attracted the least coverage: only eight stories or 2.05 percent of the total. Stories coded as "other" because they didn't fit one of the topic categories dealt with weather, natural disasters, accidents and seasonal events like fall yardwork or New Year's predictions.

More than half of the stories, 58.38 percent, were shorter than 100 picas in length. The longest stories, those 150 or more picas in length, tended to be about governance, while the topic of crime generated the shortest stories, those shorter than 50 picas. That government stories would be longest was not surprising: length is another of those "signals" used to tell readers a story is important, and the topic of

governance was considered most important among all topics because more stories AND more total length of copy were devoted to it. However, the brevity of crime stories was somewhat unexpected. Crime news was the second most common topic of all stories published, which would seem to indicate significant importance -- an indication contradicted by short length.

Three-quarters of the stories (75.60%) were written by the newspaper's own local staff or a reporter at one of its own out-of-town bureaus rather than by a wire service such as The Associated Press, the New York Times News Service or Reuters.

Bylines were common. Of the 344 stories (86.43% of the total) that carried a byline, 60.28 percent were male and 30.70 percent were female. The gender of the remainder (9.01%) could not be determined from the reporter's name or initials. Male bylines were more common than female in news stories (63.57% male compared with 28.29% female). But the predominance of male bylines on feature stories -- 51.04 percent male bylines compared with 37.50 percent female -- was somewhat unexpected given an observed tendency of the newspaper to assign "soff" stories or beats -- those more likely to be categorized as features -- to women more often than to men.

Over the 11-year period covered in this pilot study, it appears that, at least on this paper, the number of women on the staff may be increasing or they are perhaps getting a larger share of the front-page stories, for the percentage of female bylines increased over time from a low of 31.88 percent in 1986 to a high of 52.78 percent in 1996.

Across all 398 stories, a total of 1,427 different sources were mentioned in news stories.[50] The number of sources cited in a story ranged from one -- 55 stories or 13.96 percent attributed information to just one source -- to 16 sources used in one story. Four sources per story was the mode.

Data on Source Title, Hierarchical Position. Most, 86.48 percent, of the sources to whom information was attributed were named, a finding that may be of some

comfort to journalists and media critics concerned about an over-reliance upon unnamed or anonymous sources. Perhaps even more comforting is evidence that reliance on unnamed sources has decreased over time: 21.24 percent of the sources in 1986 stories were unnamed compared to only 5.19 percent in 1996.

Examination of the sources' titles, whether or not the source was also named, indicates that the greatest majority of sources are officials: either official spokespersons for other individuals or for organizations, or top or middle-level managers of organizations. This finding is consistent with findings of previous research studies cited in the literature.[51]

Almost nine in 10 (87.3 percent) of the 835 sources identified by title had some "official" title. But only 101 of them (12.2 percent) were women, compared to 45 of the 106 titled sources (42.5 percent) who were not officials. Of those with official titles, 224 (26.8 percent) were top managers: CEOs, presidents, mayors, chairmen/women, owners. Another 434 (52.0 percent) were middle managers: directors, managers, senators, representatives, council members. Only 57 (6.8 percent) were identified by the title "spokesperson," "spokesman" or "spokeswoman." When women were identified with an official title, it was most often that of "spokeswomen" (24.6 percent of all spokespeople were female) rather than top or middle managers (12.5 percent and 13.6 percent, respectively).

The sources whose employer was identified were almost lopsidedly government officials: 64 percent (709) of the 1107 sources with identified employers worked for or represented government agencies or departments at the federal, state or local level. Only 202 (18.2 percent) worked for businesses, and another 153 (13.8 percent) worked for not-for-profit organizations, the smallest number -- 43 or 3.9 percent -- worked for professional or interest group associations.

The researchers concluded from this pilot data that the answer to their first research question: "Do journalists still favor official sources of information in their reporting of the news, as the literature indicates has traditionally been the case?" is yes. At least in the newspaper analyzed, journalists DO still heavily favor official

sources of information in their reporting of the news. And because male officials significantly outnumbered female officials as sources, it appears journalists heavily favor official MALE sources of information.

Data on Source and Byline Gender. More than two-thirds of the 1418 named sources, 67.89 percent, were male, compared to 18.77 percent female and 13.34 percent whose names or initials did not clearly indicate their gender. These findings are proportionally consistent with earlier studies that have recorded the gender of news sources.

More than one-third of the stories (34.12%) used no female sources. An almost equal number (37.44%) used only one female source, and no story used more than five. In contrast, only 4.27 percent of the stories used no male sources. Almost half (47.56%) of the stories used one or two male sources, and approximately 15 percent used five or more males. One story used 11 male sources. The average story used 2.41 male sources but only .65 female sources.

The proportion of female sources has grown considerably in the past decade, however: up from 10.62 percent female in 1986 to 28.89 percent female in 1996. It is perhaps only a curious coincidence (a reflection of changes in preference for naming children?) that the proportion of references to sources of indeterminable gender -- the "can't tell" group -- has decreased over the same period, down from 20.80 percent in 1986 to 4.44 percent in 1996.

Women were least represented as sources in coverage of business: only 8 (8.0 percent) of the source attributions in business stories were female while 77 (77.0 percent) were male. Women sources were almost as scarce in coverage of governance, the most reported topic in this study: only 36 of the 322 sources used in governance stories (11.2 percent) were female compared to 258 (80.1 percent) who were male.

Even in topic areas such as education and culture where it might be presumed there would be more women officials, men outnumbered women as

sources. [52] Men accounted for 49.6 percent of the sources in education stories compared to 39.6 percent for women, and men accounted for 53.9 percent of culture story sources while women accounted for 34.2 percent. But education and culture stories did account for the largest portion of source attributions to women of any story topics, even though that number was still smaller than the number of male attributions.

Women were least likely to be sources for international stories (11.1 percent compared to 58.0 percent male and an interesting but unexplainable 30.9 percent that could not be identified as to gender. In local stories, women came closest to parity with male sources but even so, more than twice as many men were cited as sources in local stories (333) as women (143). Women were equally underrepresented in national and state stories: 13.5 percent of national story sources and 13.0 percent of sources in state stories.

The longer the attribution, generally the more likely it was the attributed source was male. With the exception of a slight tick upward for women sources in attributions 30 or more typeset lines in length, information attributed to women was more likely to be short in length: 42.1 percent of attributions six or fewer lines in length compared to only 3.2 percent of 24 to 29 lines. Because length is one indication of journalistic salience, it appears that even when women did serve as sources, their information was judged less newsworthy than information from males.

Just as length is an indicator of the importance journalists attach to information, so is placement of a story in the newspaper. The front page is THE most important placement, and generally the farther back in the newspaper a story appears, the less important it's been judged by the editor. In this study, more attributions of information to men were on the front page of the paper (54.5 percent of all page one stories included information attributed to men) than information attributed to women. But particularly interesting in terms of placement was the large proportion of attributions to sources whose gender could not be determined:

121 of the 763 attributions to sources that appeared on page one were androgynous or gender unspecific because initials were used instead of a first name or the first name was one used by both men and women.

Based on that analysis of this pilot data, therefore, the researchers' second research question: "Are the sources, and especially the official sources, upon whom journalists rely still predominantly male, as has been the finding in past studies?" can be answered in the affirmative.

Female reporters seemed neither more nor less likely than male reporters to prefer official sources over those with no official title or standing. Based on an analysis of stories with bylines where the gender of the reporter could be determined, male and female reporters used a proportionately equal number of sources with titles in top or middle management, other official titles or the title of spokesperson. Male and female reporters were equally disinclined to use non-official sources.

The researchers' third research question: "Does the gender of the reporter make a difference in the tendency to rely upon official sources? Are male and female journalists equally likely to rely on official sources?" thus is answered in the negative: the gender of the reporter does not seem to make a difference in reliance on official sources.

Male reporters, even accounting for their greater numbers in this study, were proportionally more inclined than their female counterparts to use a larger number of sources -- no matter the gender of the source. Overall, men used an average of 4.04 sources per story, while women used 3.68.

The gap was much greater, however, in the use of male sources. Sixty-one percent of the attributions to male sources in all bylined stories were written by male reporters, compared to 26.2 percent in stories written by female reporters. The remainder of the attributions to men were in stories where the gender of the writer was unclear, or there was no byline.

Of the total attributions to female sources, 53.28 percent were in stories written by the 214 male reporters, compared to 36.3 percent in stories written by the 109 women journalists. The remainder of the attributions were in stories with no byline or where the gender of the reporter is unclear.

Looked at on their own, those percentages might indicate that male reporters are more likely to quote women sources than women reporters are. But viewed in another way, of the 401 sources used by the 109 identifiably female reporters in this study, 94 or 23.44 percent were women. Of the 865 sources used by the 214 identifiably male reporters, 138 or 15.95 were women. While statistical significance was not calculated in this pilot study, the differences are noticeable.

Another interesting finding emerged from this data: of the bylined stories that used no female sources, whether official or not, 69.44 percent were written by men. Female bylined stories accounted for only 13.89 percent of stories containing no attributions to women. The remainder carried no bylines or bylines of indeterminate gender.

The fourth research question: "Does the gender of the reporter make a difference in the extent to which women are used as sources? Are male and female journalists equally likely to use women as sources?" appears to receive a mixed answer. The gender of the reporter does seem to make a difference in the extent to which women are used as sources, and male reporters are not as likely as female journalists to use female sources, but the differences are not great.

The researchers expected that female journalists might attach greater credibility to female sources than do male reporters and thus use proportionately more of them in their stories. After all, since they have had the opportunity in their own professional lives to see that a woman journalist can be just as competent as a male counterpart, they might be expected to carry that attitude into their selection of sources and seek out the women -- spokespersons, officials, middle managers and top managers -- rather than the men when both could be expected to have equally

valuable information. While these expectations appeared to be true, the findings showed only a slight tilt in that direction.

Conclusions

Implications for the Media's Construction of Reality. The fifth research question addressed in this pilot study asked, "If journalists are, indeed, heavily dependent upon official sources, how does this affect the media's construction of reality, the "worldview" presented to media audiences and consumers? Is the "reality" the media present an official male reality because male bylines continue to dominate news columns and because male sources continue to provide the majority of the information subsidies to journalists?"

Based on analysis of this pilot data, the researchers would suggest these impacts:

1) The worldview that media, at least this one newspaper, present to media audiences and consumers would lead those audiences and consumers to believe that news is made and information is controlled almost exclusively by males acting in some official capacity, with official status in some occupational hierarchy. Women were rarely cited as sources, a signal to the reader that they are relatively unimportant in both public and private sector activities and events. A media consumer might infer that this lack of importance is the result of women not holding positions of authority and/or their lack of credible, valuable information. And of course we know that's not necessarily reality. Or the truth.

2) To the extent that information is power, and positions of power create opportunities for access to information, the media worldview would have audiences and consumers believe that women are virtually without power and thus have no access to information that would be of use to the public. While there certainly are women who belie this particular construction of reality, the researchers contend that women are not represented in the higher echelons of organizations in

proportion to their total number in the population, and therefore are less likely to be identified as viable sources. It probably is to be expected that men have more organizational power, and thus more information, than women. As much as one might like to blame the media for NOT telling it like it is, in this instance the media may actually be mirroring reality, as unfortunate and inequitable as that reality might be.

3) Women journalists, by and large, seem only slightly more sensitive to this "symbolic annihilation of women" in their choices of news sources than their male counterparts. And that may be disappointing news for journalism educators and editors, both of whom frequently explain and justify gender diversity efforts by suggesting that adding more women to newspaper staffs will enlarge and make more representative the frame that's used to report the news. Women journalists, even those who have been taught as students about the underrepresentation of women in news reports as well as on news staffs, don't seem significantly more likely than men to seek gender balance in their sources. True, the men have had the same kind of educational sensitization as students. But what may be discouraging to many, especially feminists, is that these attempts at sensitization don't seem to have taken hold even with the women, who one might expect to be more receptive to that message. Perhaps women journalists don't believe there's a pattern of gender inequality in selection of sources. Or perhaps whatever inclinations they might have had to address inequities have disappeared in the process of professional socialization to journalism's craft values, peer pressure within the newsroom and organizational routines.

The interrelationship of power, information and gender that this study's research questions addressed is surely too complex to be fully explored, much less definitively so, in a study of one newspaper. The authors believe more comparisons must be made. And it is the authors' intent to do just that by expanding the study to include additional newspapers in order to get a regional rather than merely local focus to the research.

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44. For this research official sources were operationalized as those sources holding a position of authority and responsibility in, or representing as a spokesperson, an organization or governmental agency

45. The current daily circulation of *The State* [Columbia, S.C.] is 130,649 and Sunday circulation is 168,478.

46. The number of stories from each of the six years sampled ranged from a high of 80 stories in 1992 to a low of 63 stories in 1994, but there was no consistent pattern of either increase or decrease in number of stories per year that would indicate a conscious effort to reallocate a constant amount of space -- the two section front pages -- among either fewer, longer stories or a greater number of shorter stories.

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Gender Bias in Newspaper Coverage of the 1996 Olympic Games

A Content Analysis of Five Major Dailies

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Gender Bias in Newspaper Coverage of the 1996 Olympic Games

A Content Analysis of Five Major Dailies

Abstract

This study compares newspaper coverage of male and female athletes during the 1996 Summer Olympic Games. Feature stories in five leading U.S. newspapers were examined for incidence of gender bias in reporting and photography. Characterizations of female athletes supported previous studies which found female athletes were more likely than males to be described in terms of their relationships, emotionality and appearance. The study found no evidence of gender bias in terms of quantitative representation of female athletes, or in the placement and prominence of stories, use of martial language, or hierarchical naming practices. For several other criteria noted as sources of bias in previous studies, women received more favorable treatment than men. The study found that story assignments followed gender lines, however, a majority of profiles about both male and female athletes were written by male reporters.

Introduction

The 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia were touted as the Games of the female athlete. Women made up a larger proportion of athletes (34.4%) than ever in history. According to the U.S. Olympic Committee, 3,770 women competed in Atlanta, 39 percent more than competed in Barcelona. Two new women's events debuted -- soccer and softball, along with men's and women's mountain biking and beach volleyball. While men still outnumbered women nearly two to one (381 to 276 on the U.S. team), women's progress toward Olympic parity was visible.

Women also were recognized as an important television audience. NBC, the official U.S. Olympic television network, sought to deliver on promised ratings to advertisers by attracting the largest possible audience -- thus, attracting women was critical. NBC's strategy was to air more prime-time hours of sports which tested well with women, such as gymnastics and swimming, and to emphasize human interest angles through more than 140 taped personality profiles of athletes and historical "Centennial Moments" features. Statistics and "macho" sports such as boxing and wrestling were downplayed, an approach panned by some media critics as "the Oprah Olympics" (Farhi, 1996).

NBC estimated that 202 million Americans watched some part of its 14 days of Olympic broadcasts, the most ever. Its average nightly ratings of 22.4 percent of U.S. households showed a 26 percent increase over the ratings during the Barcelona Games in 1992 (Farhi, August 3, 1996). Among women aged 25-54, NBC's ratings increased 26% over the 1992 Olympic Games, the same as its overall increase (Hiestand, 1996).

The focus on women in 1996 is especially significant, considering that the historical relationship of the Olympic Games to women is far less rosy.[1] The current study examines the treatment of female athletes in the news media in this environment of unprecedented emphasis on the female athlete and female consumer of Olympic news. While few studies have examined gender bias in Olympic news coverage (Daddario, 1994; Duncan, 1990; Farrell, 1989), a significant body of literature documenting the phenomenon of gender bias in sports media has emerged from media scholars, feminist scholars and sports sociologists.[2]

These scholars tend to concur that, as a part of sports culture, sports media reflect the dominant gender order that is represented in sport itself. Thus, just as women are excluded, segregated and trivialized in sport, sports media also tend to ignore and marginalize female athletes.

Forms of gender bias in sports journalism

Scholars studying gender and race bias in media content typically focus on two primary criteria identified by Clark (1972): *representation*, or the quantitative presence of the group of interest (in this case female athletes in comparison with their representation in the population); and *respect*, the treatment and status accorded to this group. Both representation and respect are considered necessary for bias-free coverage.

Representation. Studies of gender in sports coverage show two consistent patterns relating to representation. First, female athletes receive disproportionately less coverage than male athletes, and second, media coverage overrepresents women in "feminine" sports and underrepresents those in sports not seen as consistent with cultural images of femininity.

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Women's sports have historically received less coverage than men's sports (Bryant, 1980; Kane, 1988; Rintala & Birrell, 1984). Coakley (1986) estimated that 95 percent of media sports coverage is devoted to men's sports. Studies of television sports programming have found it to be "a virtually all male world with rare excursions" into the world of women's sports (Sabo & Jansen, 1990). Similarly, Lumpkin and Williams (1991) found that *Sports Illustrated*, the nation's largest-circulation sports magazine, devotes an average 90.8 percent of feature articles to male athletes, and 8 percent to female athletes.

Similar gender representation has been found in newspaper sports coverage. Woolard (1983) found that 85 percent of newspaper sports coverage was devoted to men's sports. In a more recent study, the Amateur Athletic Association of Los Angeles found that in four 1990 newspapers, stories on men's sports outnumbered women's sports by 23 to 1. Similarly, the study found that photos of male athletes outnumbered those of female athletes 13 to one (Newspaper Sports Staff Continues to Slight Women, 1991, p. 3.). A study of four Midwest newspapers' coverage of men's and women's basketball at two universities found that coverage of men's basketball dominated that of women's by every measure (number of stories, total column inches, average lengths of stories, features on players, photographs and headlines) despite the fact that the women's teams at both universities had better seasons than the men's teams (Evarts, 1996).

The 1992 annual Women, Men and Media survey found extensive coverage of the '92 Winter Olympics in ten U.S. newspapers, including the Atlanta Constitution, Los Angeles Times, USA Today, and Washington Post. However, newspaper coverage focused predominately on male athletes, despite the fact that nine of the U.S.'s eleven medals were won by women. According to Lont (1995), it was more common to find a story about a male who lost than a female who won.

The absence of women from sports media is not inconsequential. The implicit message, when women are absent or underrepresented, is that female athletes either do not exist, or have no achievements that are newsworthy. The problem of lack of representation is compounded by the tendency of media to emphasize those sports which are seen as "sex appropriate" for women, while

ignoring those which are seen as "masculine." Thus, women's sports which do receive coverage are likely to be sports which emphasize feminine ideals of grace, beauty and glamour, such as figure skating and women's gymnastics, and which reveal the body rather than hiding it under equipment (Boutilier and SanGiovanni, 1983; Daddario, 1992; Duncan, 1990; Kane, 1988; Rintala & Birrell, 1984). The media also tend to highlight female athletes in individual sports, such as tennis and golf, over female athletes in team sports (Daddario, 1992; Rintala & Burrell, 1984).

Respect. Content analyses of portrayals of female athletes reveal common sources of bias which contribute to recurring themes of trivialization and devaluation.

Focus on appearance. A number of sports and media scholars have found that female athletes tend to be described in media according to their physical appearance and perceived desirability to men, rather than their athletic ability (Bryson, 1987; Corrigan, 1972; Graydon, 1983; Hilliard, 1984; Lumpkin & Williams, 1991; Messner, 1988; Vertinsky, 1994). While physical descriptors of male athletes typically relate to their athletic build and strength, descriptors of female athletes often relate to their sexual attractiveness and desirability from the perspective of the male gaze (Daddario, 1994; Lumpkin & Williams, 1991).

Recent studies of the types of praise given to male and female athletes by sports commentators continue to show that female athletes are more likely to be praised for how they look than for how they perform (Duncan, 1990; Duncan & Hasbrook, 1988; Nelson, 1991). By contrast, attributes applied to male players related to mental deftness, such as "brilliant shots" or "smart fouls." No similar references to mental ability were made for the womens' game.

Duncan's (1990) study of photographs of female athletes in the 1984 and 1988 Olympic Games suggests that physically attractive female athletes receive more coverage than those equally talented in the same sport who are not so attractive. Duncan found that female athletes who met the glamourous ideal of "long hair, stylish clothes and lavishly applied make up" (p. 28) were more likely to be the subject of sports photographs than those who were not. During these Olympic

Games, photos of track star Florence Griffith-Joyner and figure skater Katarina Witt -- both of whom embody this feminine ideal -- appeared more frequently than any other female athlete.

Emphasis on relationships/dependency on others. Another source of bias in reporting about women is the tendency to define them by their relationships -- their roles as wife, mother, or daughter (Bosmaijian, 1995; Foreit *et al*, 1980). Thus, the female subject of a news story is described as "a mother of two," "the wife of a fellow athlete" or "daughter of a cardiologist," where these facts are less likely to be mentioned about a male subject. Daddario (1992) noted that the most prominent *Sports Illustrated* coverage of Chris Evert's career, including a cover photograph and pictorial retrospective, focused prominently on her role as a soon-to-be-wife. The front page headline: "I'm going to be a full-time wife" (p. 58). This type of bias suggests that it is not enough to be an athlete, one must also be nurturing to others.

Daddario (1994) found that television media disproportionately emphasized female Olympic athletes' roles as daughters, reducing them to a childlike status of girls who needed protection and emotional support from parents, rather than as full-grown and emotionally independent athletes.

Emotional weakness. Hilliard (1984) has found that female athletes' mental health -- in particular their emotional well-being -- is emphasized by reporters as a critical part of their performance. He notes that the media's emphasis on female athlete's emotional dependency on coaches and family are emphasized in the press, leading to a portrayal of female athletes as tending toward "excessive dependence" on others and "emotional difficulties that include anxiety and depression" (p. 254). Daddario's (1994) study of 1992 Winter Olympic television coverage found that commentators frequently characterized female athlete's weaknesses as "mental," or emotional, such as a lack of focus or self-confidence. Duncan's (1990) study of photographs of Olympic athletes found that female athletes were much more likely than males to be shown crying. Because sports culture values stoicism and discourages emotionalism, emphasis on female athletes' emotional states challenges their status as "real" athletes.

Past successes vs. past failures. Duncan, et al. (1990) found that television commentators mentioned past successes and strengths of male athletes more frequently than those of female athletes. Messner et al. (1993) found that when men lost, it was not due to individual shortcomings, but because of the power, strength or intelligence of their opponents (p. 260). Women were more likely to be blamed for their athletic failures because of mental flaws such as lack of confidence or aggression. When women were successful, sports commentators attributed their success to attributes which included "emotion, luck, togetherness and family" (Messner at al, 1993, p. 227).

Hilliard (1984) found that male athletes' character flaws tended to be more readily dismissed by the media than those of female athletes. In studies of the 1984 and 1992 Winter Olympics, Farrell (1989) and Daddario (1994) noted that male athletes' "brash, wiseguy" behavior is often dismissed by the media with a "boys will be boys" brand of apologia. Italian skier Alberto Tomba was credited with creating "Tombamania" based on this "bad boy" image (Daddario, 1994, p. 281).

Male agency and control vs. female passivity. In television sports, Duncan et al (1990) found that commentators characterized male athletes as active subjects, powerfully in charge of their games, whereas female athletes were framed as reactive objects. Boutilier and SanGiovanni's (1983) analysis of photography in *Sports Illustrated* found that male athletes were likely to be photographed fully engaged in sport; female athletes were more likely than men to be posed in passive and nonathletic positions.

Linguistic sexism. Reporters' language use may naturalize and reinforce prevailing views of gender-based status. Renzetti & Curran (1995) define linguistic sexism as the ways in which a language devalues members of one sex, usually through defining women's "place" in society as a secondary status or by ignoring women entirely (p. 150).

- *Gender marking.* Women's athletic performance is marginalized through the practice of asymmetrical gender marking, whereby women's athletic events are consistently labeled as "women's events," while men's events are simply athletic events (Duncan, 1990; Halbert & Latimer, 1994; Hall, 1988; Messner et al., 1993; Nelson, 1991). For instance, in television coverage, men's NCAA

championship basketball games were called "the national championship," while the equivalent women's game was gender-marked as the "women's national championship" (Duncan, Messner, & Williams, 1990). By making the men's event "the norm," women's events, by implication, are framed as inferior.

- *Condescending descriptors*. Gender scholars have argued that the media relegate female athletes' to subordinate stature by defining them as nonadults. In a study of televised sports events, Duncan, Messner & Williams (1990) found that on-air commentators referred to female athletes as "girls" or young ladies," while male athletes were given adult status as "men" or "young men." Daddario (1994) found that female Olympic athletes in the 1992 Winter Games in their mid to late-twenties were described in ways that reduced them to adolescent status. Speed skater Bonnie Blair was described as "America's little sister," and "America's favorite girl next door" (p. 282). Cathleen Turner, a 29-year-old speed skater was described as a "pixie" and "a Tinkerbell." Such endearments are terms that our culture usually reserves for subordinates; their use frames female athletes in a subordinate role.

- *Hierarchy of naming*. Duncan, Messner & Williams (1990) found that female athletes were more likely to be called by their first names by television commentators. In their study of 1989 tennis tournaments, female athletes were called by their fist names 52.7 percent of the time, while male athletes were called by their first names just 7.8 percent of the time. Our cultural history suggests that first names are used for children, servants and those with whom we are very familiar; referring to someone by a last name suggests greater social distance and respect.

- *Martial metaphors*. Martial metaphors are those that apply the imagery of war to sport. For instance Trujillo (1995, p. 411) found that television football commentators used terms which framed "the body as weapon" and "the game as war." Terms used in play-by- play included "attack," "wound," "destroy," "cripple," "explode," and "weapons." Duncan, Messner & Williams (1990) found sports commentators used martial metaphors much more frequently when describing male basketball players that female players. For example, a male player was said to "attack" the

hoop, while a female "went to" the hoop. Jansen & Sabo (1994) argue that sport/war metaphors valorize strength and aggression, characteristics which are inconsistent with femininity. Because war is a "quintessentially masculine activity" (p. 9), one would expect to see martial metaphors used more frequently to describe men's sports. Conversely, their absence as descriptors of women's sports contributes to portrayals of female athletes as passive and unaggressive.

Bias in graphic elements. The trivialization of womens sports extends to the importance given to women's sport in layout and visual dominance. Silverstein (1996) compared The New York Times' coverage of the 1995 women's and men's NCAA basketball tournaments and found that the *Times* framed the women's event as trivial through visual elements including fewer articles on the sports cover page, shorter article lengths, fewer photos, fewer cover page "teasers," and fewer and smaller graphic elements.

Causes of bias

Gender bias in sports coverage is attributed to several factors: societal views of women in general; a patriarchal sports culture dominated by males at every level; the financial imperatives of pleasing advertisers by attracting the large male audience and keeping them by appealing to male interests; news values which define women's sports as less important than men's sports, and newsroom practices which make covering women's sports logistically more difficult than covering men's sports.

The historic male domination of sport means that men's competitions often have long lores of history and tradition, giving them a more colorful context to write about than newer women's events which lack such a history. Silverstein (1996) notes that this may be a factor in the unequal treatment of the men's and women's NCAA basketball tournaments.

As Lumpkin & Williams (1991) point out in their study of Sports Illustrated, the problem of lack of representation of female athlete is attributable to the fact that the sports media's audience is predominately male, as are the most popular sports of this audience. They suggest that the

overrepresentation of male athletes is more a result of a cultural bias than a deliberate discriminatory policy by journalists.

The revenue-driven nature of mass media is also blamed for stereotypical treatment of female athletes. As Hilliard (1984) notes, sponsors desire feminine athletes to promote their products, encouraging female athletes to meet traditional gender expectations for appearance and behavior. Similarly, Theberge & Cronk (1986) conclude that newspapers' reliance on wire services, well-established sources and a consistent layout structure favor coverage of male athletes. They note that wire services and well-established sources tend to provide predominately men's sports news, while the need for a consistent layout structure makes it difficult for "other" news to find space in the sports section.

Rationale

The current study expands on previous studies of gender bias in sports coverage by focusing on feature articles about Olympic athletes in five leading U.S. newspapers. Surprisingly little research has focused on gender in sports coverage of the Olympic Games. Of four known studies, two were rhetorical analyses of television commentary (Daddario, 1994; Farrell, 1989) one focused on newspaper coverage (Women, Men & Media Annual, 1992) and one was a qualitative analysis of magazine photography (Duncan, 1990).

The focus on leading U.S. newspapers is significant because of their prestige, reach and influence. Top newspapers like the New York Times, Washington Post, and LA Times are looked to as bastions of journalistic excellence (or in the case of USA Today, journalistic innovation). They have the financial resources to hire superior journalists, editors and designers. Their formulas are often copied by smaller market newspapers, and both print and broadcast media often take their cues as to which issues should receive coverage from them. Together with the other newspaper being studied, The Atlanta Constitution, these publications reach nearly five million subscribers (Editor & Publisher Yearbook, 1995), and thus are significant sources of information about the Olympic games

for these readers. Their stature as prestige publications would lead one to expect that they would exhibit less gender bias in reporting than smaller publications.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which the nation's leading newspapers reflect gender bias in feature stories about Olympic athletes. Research questions relate to representation (quantitative presence), respect (status accorded) and reporting of personality profiles published during the Olympic Games in five leading U.S. newspapers.

RQ1: Representation
Are male and female athletes equally represented?
- What percentage of feature articles are devoted to male and female athletes?
- Which sports receive the most coverage for male and female athletes?
- Do sports and athletes considered "gender appropriate" receive more coverage than those which are not?

RQ2: Respect
Do portrayals of female athletes reflect previously identified forms of gender bias?
- Do articles comment on female athletes' appearance more than male athletes?
- Do articles comment on female athletes' relationships more than male athletes?
- Do articles comment on female athletes emotional responses more than male athletes?
- Do articles mention successes and failures of both male and female athletes?
- Are female athlete's personalities framed differently than males?
- Do articles and photos depict female athletes as active rather than passive?
- Are male and female athletes depicted engaging in the same kinds of activities?

RQ3: Reporting
- Are female reporters assigned to cover women's events more than males?
- Does the gender of the reporter correlate to the incidence of gender bias in reporting?
- Does article placement and visual prominence trivialize female athletes?

Method

This study is a quantitative comparison of the treatment of male and female athletes in newspaper personality profiles. Five daily newspapers were chosen as the population for the study. The first four were chosen because of their status as the largest circulation, general interest newspapers in the U.S.[3] These are USA Today, The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times,

The Washington Post. Although it ranks 30th in overall circulation, The Atlanta Constitution was selected because it represents the host city of the Games, and its coverage reached not only regular subscribers, but thousands of visitors who attended the Games.

All issues of these newspapers during the 16-day Olympic period from July 19, 1996 to Aug. 4, 1996 were examined, including special Saturday and Sunday issues of USA Today which were published during the Games. The study focused on the type of story known as the "personality profile." According to Stone (1992. p. 355), the personality profile is the most frequently written type of feature story. It is defined as a feature story focusing on a single person, "designed to capture the person's character for readers" (Stone, 1992, p. 464). It is marked by depictions of major life experiences and achievements, direct quotations, and descriptions which gives the reader a visual image of the subject (Stone, 1992). Personality profiles which appeared as part of sports columnists' regular columns were excluded from the study because columns, by their nature, reflect the commentary of the author and are not held to the same standards of objectivity as news features. Articles of less than six column inches in length, such as USA Today's thumbnail profile of every U.S. Olympic athlete, were not considered in the study because they did not meet the criteria of fully-developed feature stories. This procedure yielded a census of 170 of personality profiles. The Atlanta Constitution published more personality profiles than any other newspaper ($n=72$), followed by USA Today ($n=42$), The Los Angeles Times ($n=25$), The New York Times ($n=24$), and The Washington Post ($n=7$), whose coverage of the Olympics was much less comprehensive and primarily news- rather than feature-oriented.

Coding categories. A code sheet was constructed to evaluate each article. As Berelson (1952) suggests, variables relating to both form and content were observed. Items of analysis related to form included placement in the paper (front page, section cover, or inside page), as well as positioning on the page (above or below the fold) and visual dominance. Gender of the reporter, where discernable from the byline, was also noted.

Article content was examined for forms of bias identified in previous studies of sports coverage. These included gender of the featured athlete, mention of appearance, marital and parental status, emotional dependence on others, past successes or failures, descriptions of personality traits. Direct quotes from the athlete were examined for expressions of emotionality, humility, confidence, and explanations of competitive strategy or performance outcome. The reporter's language use was examined for method of naming the athlete (last name, first name, both) and presence of gender marking, martial language, and trivializing language such as "girl," "boy" or "kid" to refer to adult athletes.

Accompanying photos of the athlete were examined for depictions of active vs. passive poses, sports vs. non-sports contexts, glamorized appearance of athlete (such as showing a male in a tuxedo or a female in a sequined gown or with lavishly applied make-up and hairstyling), and type of activity depicted.

Coding procedure. Twenty-one undergraduate students enrolled in a special topics course (COM 490 - Gender, Race and Media) and one paid student assistant were trained as coders. The coders were given oral and written instructions and examples of codesheet definitions, and participated in practice coding and discussion. The coders were not informed about the specific research questions, and worked independently. They were instructed to code as objectively as possible and not to assume (because of the nature of the course in which they were enrolled) that the articles would reflect bias.

A multi-step coding process was used to code the ads. First, each coder coded a subsample of 10 percent of the total articles (15 articles) for purposes of determining intercoder reliability. Intercoder reliability was computed using percentage of agreement (Kassarjian, 1977; Stempel, 1981). Intercoder reliability scores for the subsample ranging from 88.5 to 93.5 were achieved. Several questions were clarified and instructions to coders altered to address items where disagreements had occurred. Then each article was coded by two coders. Disagreements between coders were resolved by a third independent coder.

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Data analysis. The SPSS statistical package was used to analyze the data. Data was sorted by gender of the athlete, and a split run analysis performed to yield separate data sets for males and females. The frequencies procedure was used to determine the occurrence of variables of interest in each gender group. The sorting and split run procedure was also used to isolate the five newspapers and compare their performance. For variables where frequency counts revealed differences in treatment based on gender of the athlete, statistical correlations were performed to determine the relationship between gender of the reporter and incidence of bias.

Findings

Representation. In terms of quantitative presence, female athletes compared favorably with male athletes. Of 170 profiles, 93 were of male athletes, and 77 were of female athletes. Proportionately, female athletes were actually better represented in relation to their numbers than males -- 2.5 percent of all female athletes were profiled, compared to 1.4 percent of all male athletes. In addition, 82 percent of female athletes profiled were represented in photographs, compared to 73 percent of males. Comparing coverage among newspapers, USA Today had the greatest disparity between coverage of male and female athletes (62% of articles devoted to males, 38% percent to females). Of profiles published in The Atlanta Constitution, 54% were devoted to males and 46% to females. The New York Times and The Los Angeles Times published just one more profile of male athletes than females. Four of the seven profiles published in The Washington Post were about female athletes.

Women's sports most represented were swimming (15.6% of all profiles), track and field (14.3%), gymnastics (10.4%), and basketball (10.4%). Two of these sports, swimming and gymnastics, have been consistently identified as "sex appropriate" sports for women in public opinion surveys (Daddario, 1992; Snyder & Kane, 1990). The other two sports, track and basketball, are not similarly considered to be "feminine" sports. Absent were profiles of female athletes in the sports of canoeing, field hockey, handball, and yachting. Fifty-three different female athletes were profiled;

Irish swimmer Michelle Smith and gymnast Kerri Strug were profiled more frequently than any other female athletes (three times each).

By contrast, the sports most represented in the profiles of male athletes were boxing (17.2% of all articles), track and field (15.1%), weightlifting (8.6%) and wrestling (8.6%). Three of these sports, boxing, weightlifting and wrestling, are Olympic sports from which women are excluded. This finding suggests newspaper coverage did not follow the same strategy as television coverage of downplaying "macho" sports in favor of those with cross-gender appeal. No profiles male athletes competing in the sports of handball, rowing, shooting or soccer were found. Of the 72 different male athletes profiled, boxer Antonio Tarver and sprinter Michael Johnson were profiled most frequently (three times each).

Respect

Appearance. The focus on female athletes' appearance observed in previous studies was not borne out by the data. While exactly half of the profiles about female athletes commented on appearance, slightly more than half of the profiles of male athletes mentioned their appearance (53.8%). Aspects of women's appearance commented upon most frequently were height (29.9% of responses describing appearance); weight (26%); hair (13%); and muscular build (13%). Aspects of men's appearance commented upon most frequently were the same, although in different order: weight (36.6% of comments about appearance); height (23.7%); muscular build (14%) and hair (11.8%). Gender-based differences were found in comments regarding general good looks/beauty and sex appeal. Reporters were more than four times as likely to mention the "good looks," "beauty" or "cuteness" of female athletes (9.1%) than they were to mention the general good looks of male athletes (2.2%). Three profiles of female athletes mentioned their sexual attractiveness, including a Los Angeles Times story which reproduced the Playboy magazine cover which featured Brazilian

basketball player Hortencia Oliva provocatively posed. References to sexual attractiveness were absent from profiles of male athletes.

Male athletes received more uncomplimentary comments about their appearance than female athletes. (10.8% of profiles of male athletes included uncomplimentary comments about their appearance, compared to 7.8% of profiles of female athletes.) Examples included a reference to powerlifter Mark Henry's weight in phrases like "stronger, faster, wider" and the headline "the Great Wide Hope," and Mikal Martikan's "pimply face."

Glaring exceptions to the positive trends for women:

> Relay runner Dannette Young-Stone is described as "a pretty manicurist with braided hair," in an article that focuses its first two and a half paragraphs on the nail salon she owns, rather than her role as an Olympic athlete (The Atlanta Constitution, July 31, 1996).
>
> Gold medal swimmer Michelle Smith, described romantically from a decidedly male gaze as "freckle-faced" with "light green Irish eyes. . . . She's one feisty lady" by USA Today (July 26, 1996).
>
> Juliana Furtado described by The Atlanta Constitution as a "sports covergirl" (July 30, 1996).

These descriptions frame the athlete as something to be gazed upon for others' pleasure, and diminish their identity as athletes.

Female athletes were described in terms normally reserved for children, and were referred to as "girls" or "kids" slightly more frequently (7.8%) than males were referred to as "boys" or "kids" (5.4%).

> - Michelle Smith described as a "lass" (Los Angeles Times, July 21, 1996).
>
> - Ryoko Tamura as "a national darling" and a "pixie" (The Atlanta Constitution, July 26, 1996).

This infantalization is epitomized in the description of 14-year-old swimmer Amanda Beard:

> "With her big blue eyes and toothy smile, Beard is as cute as the teddy bear she carries to the pool" (Atlanta Constitution, July 23, 1996).

Comments about the youth of male athletes were less descriptive, for instance, "at 28, as boyish as ever," (about Vade Slavic, Los Angeles Times, July 21, 1996) and "the Minnesota kid makes good" (about gymnast John Roethlisberger, The Atlanta Constitution, July 20, 1997).

Swimmer Amy Van Dyken (was also mentioned as being carrying a good luck toy -- while no superstitious rituals of male athletes were mentioned.

Relationships. Previous scholars have noted the tendency for female athletes to be defined by their relationships. This study finds some support for that pattern.

- *Marital status*. While reporters revealed the marital status of 20% of the males profiled, marital status was revealed for 35% of female athletes. In the case of U.S. swimmer Angel Martino, it was clearly framed as a key to her identity:

> "Little Angel ain't so little anymore. She is Angel Martino. Now a wife." (The Atlanta Constitution, July 22, 1996).

However, the correlation procedure found an insignificant relationship between gender of the reporter and mention of marital status, suggesting that female reporters were as likely to mention marital status as males.

- *Parental status*. Parental status, however, was mentioned more frequently for male athletes (17.2%) than it was for female athletes (14.2%). However, female athletes were much more likely to be characterized as struggling to balance career and family (7.8% of female athletes profiled, compared to 1.1 percent of males). For instance:

> - an article profiling cyclist Linda Brenneman begins with a focus on her infant as a spectator at her event, and ends with her comment, "I really want to get back to motherhood -- that's my life now" (The Los Angeles Times, July 22, 1986).
>
> - U.S. soccer player Joy Fawcett is pointed out as "the only mother on the team" by The Los Angeles Times (August 4, 1996). Surely there were male athletes who were the only fathers on their teams, but this fact tends to be seen as irrelevant.
>
> - The headline for the profile of Brazilian basketball standout Hortencia Oliva reads simply, "Mommy With a Jumper" (Los Angeles Times, July 25, 1996). She is defined first as a mommy, not as an athlete, despite an outstanding athletic career spanning nearly two decades. The phrasing of the headline defines her not an athlete

with a baby, but as a mommy who also can play basketball. No similar headline for males (e.g., "Daddy with a Jumper") was found.

- *Dependence on family*. Articles about female athletes were slightly more likely to mention the athlete's siblings and parents than those about male athletes (58.4% vs. 51.6%). However, more than 40 percent of female athletes ($n=33$) were depicted as being dependent on others emotionally or financially, compared to 34.4% of male athletes. For instance, the first eight paragraphs of a profile on runner Jackie Joyner Kersey framed her as a mother's daughter, not an athlete (USA Today, July 27, 1996).

Men and women were characterized as caring for others in equal numbers (26%). However, women were quoted more often referring to their relationships. More than half of the profiles of female athletes included direct quotes in which the athlete referred to relationships with others (53.2%), compared to 40.9% of profiles of male athletes.

Emotionality. Reporters were more likely to comment on female athletes' emotions (57.1% of profiles) than males' (52.7%). Males were more than twice as likely than females to be described as emotionally stoic (14% vs. 6.5%). More than 10% of female athletes were characterized as emotionally weak, compared to 7.5% of profiles about males. For instance, tennis player Lindsey Davenport was described as "a notorious self-doubter" (Los Angeles Times, August 3, 1996).

Female athletes were far more likely to be quoted expressing an emotion (71.4% vs. 55.9%). However, they were much less likely to express confidence or bravado in their quotes than men (36.4% vs. 52.7%).

Rationality is the natural foil to emotionality. Male athletes were more likely to be described as intelligent than female athletes (10.8% of male athletes vs. 6.5% of female athletes), including mentions of college degrees and grade point averages. For instance, Les Gutches was described as having an "analytical, problem-solving nature" (USA Today, July 29, 1996); David Reid was described as "the thinking man's boxer." USA Today's profile of swimming champion Michelle Smith attributed her multiple gold medals to her trainer husband's smarts, not her own hard work or athletic ability (July 26, 1996).

However, female athletes were equally as likely as male athletes to be quoted explaining their competitive strategy or the reasons behind a performance outcome.

Character portrayals. Male and female athletes were equally likely to be characterized as aggressive (19.5%) However, descriptions of male aggression were the most vivid:

> - Gymnast Blaine Wilson "attacks the apparatus, sometimes snarling in aggression." He "bulldozed" his way, and is characterized as "a pitbull" and "a freight train." (The Atlanta Constitution, July 24, 1996)
>
> - A teammate is quoted describing Chris Humbert as "Godzilla" and "an alien monster." (The Atlanta Constitution, August 2, 1996).

The masculine trait of enduring pain was evident in a reporters' description of U.S. cyclist Marty Nothstein: "Nothstein relishes agony." The cyclist is quoted as saying "I enjoy the pain" (USA Today, July 24, 1996).

Male athletes were more likely to be depicted as arrogant (7.5% vs. 1.3% of females), and as rebellious (5.4% vs. 3.9%), although the euphemisms used to describe such male athletes, are "free spirit" (swimmer Gary Hall, Jr. and Chris Humbert) and "bad boy" (wrestler Tom Brands).

Females were much more likely to be characterized as shy (7.8%) than males (1.1%). Females were slightly more likely to be characterized as humble (16.9% vs. 15.1%) and to be quoted expressing humility over their accomplishments (13% vs. 11.8%).

A larger percentage of female athletes than males was characterized by the reporter as being naturally talented (16.9% vs. 10.8%). Female athletes were also depicted as being hard-working slightly more frequently than males (40.3% vs. (38.7%). More male athletes were depicted as overcoming obstacles than female athletes (53.8% vs. 45.5%). Physical strength was more often cited as an attribute of male athletes than of females (29% vs. 23%). More than 10% of female athletes were characterized as being physically weak (i.e., recovering from an injury, being out of shape); while less than half that number (4.3%) of male athletes were depicted as being weak. More female athletes were characterized as dominating their sports than male athletes (11.7% vs. 7.5%).

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Women were slightly more likely to be characterized as patriotic than males (22.1% vs. 18.3%). Female athletes were proportionately more likely to be depicted as financially savvy (6.5%) than male athletes (4.3%).

Successes and failures. Previous scholars have observed that female athlete's weaknesses are often pointed out by journalists, while successes are ignored. In this case, past successes (previous wins or records held) were mentioned only slightly more frequently for males than for females (91.4% vs. 89.6%). Past athletic or personal failures (such as arrest or drug use) were also mentioned more frequently in profiles of male athletes (57%) than in profiles of female athletes (44.2%).

Photographic images. Females were proportionately more likely to be photographed engaging in sport than males (58.4% of images, vs. 52.7% of images), and slightly less likely to be photographed in passive positions -- doing nothing, posing for the camera, or pictured in headshots (15.6% vs. 17.2%). Very few images were found in which the athletes' appearances had been intentionally glamorized (three images of women and two of men). Males and females were equally likely to be pictured alone (63% of photos of women and 62% of photos of men), and pictured with children (2.2%).

Photographs showed little difference in the kinds of activities in which athletes were engaged. They were equally unlikely to be shown prostrate in collapse from exertion (1.3% of females and 1.1% of males). Females were twice as likely to be shown hugging another person than males (6.5% vs. 3.2%) Only one female was photographed crying; two males were photographed crying. Men were slightly more likely than women to be photographed raising their arms in victory (9.7% of images vs. 7.8% of images).

Reporting and Design. More than two-thirds of all profiles were written by male reporters. Seventy-two percent of articles about male athletes were written by male reporters, and just 16% by female reporters (the remaining 12% included bylines where gender was undeterminable from names or where no byline was featured). Male reporters also wrote more than half of the stories about

female athletes (51.9%). Female reporters wrote 31.2% of the profiles of female athletes. Females athletes were slightly more likely to be quoted than male athletes (94.8% of stories vs. 93.5%).

Hierarchical naming. The policies of all five of the newspapers studied are to refer to a subject, after first reference, by last name. More than 95% of all articles reflected this policy. Three articles about female athletes and three articles about male athletes departed from the last name policy, using first name or alternating between first name and last name.

Stereotypical language. Martial language was used proportionately more often to describe female athletes than to describe male athletes (11.7% vs. 9.7%) with equal frequency. "Explosive" was the most common martial language descriptor for both men and women. Examples of martial language include the following:

> - In a story about U.S. soccer player Briana Scurry, the phrases "taking a pounding," "skirmishes" and "conceding little ground" (USA Today, July 31, 1997)
>
> - The terms "world record assault," "Ma's Army," "gang" "led a revolt" and "shoot down" in the profile of Chinese (male) athlete Wang Junxia (The Atlanta Constitution, July 26, 1996)
>
> - U.S. gymnast John Macready "still did not surrender men's gymnastics" despite a "misfire on the vault." A military-style name "Operation Flip-Flop" was coined by the men's gymnastics federation to describe their plan to make men's gymnastics as successful as women's (Los Angeles Times, July 23, 1996).
>
> - Shannon Miller is the "stealth gymnast" of Atlanta (Los Angeles Times, July 25, 1996) and Tom Dolan is the "young gun" of U.S. swimming (The Atlanta Constitution, July 21, 1996).

Gender-marking. Unnecessary spotlighting of gender was found on two occasions for female athletes and two occasions for male athletes. For instance, Teresa Edwards was described by The Atlanta Constitution as "the four-time Olympic *women's* basketball player," rather than just a four-time Olympic basketball player (emphasis mine). The correlation procedure revealed no significant associations between gender of the reporter and use of stereotypical language, again suggesting that male reporters are not the only ones responsible for its occurrence.

No evidence of bias was found in the placement of stories about male and female athletes. Proportionately, slightly more photos of women appeared on section cover pages than photos of men (9.1% vs. 7.5%). Approximately 90% of both male and female profiles appeared on inside pages. Slightly more profiles of women appeared "above the fold" than did profiles of men (39% vs. 31.2%). Articles about women were also more likely to be featured as the visually dominant article on the page (49.4% of articles about women, compared to 39.8% of articles about men).

Selection of quotes. Several of the quotes used by reporters reflected gender stereotypes that athletes used to describe themselves. For instance, swimmer Janet Evans is quoted as wishing for a more feminine body: "I want my shoulders to shrink and my muscles to get small so I can wear a sundress." After she retires, she plans to "go shopping with my mom -- lots of shopping" (The Atlanta Constitution, July 26, 1996). Gymnast Blaine Wilson is quoted as saying he enjoys "using brute force" (The Atlanta Constitution, July 24, 1996). Gender bias may enter into the reporting process by purposely selecting quotes which reinforce gender stereotypes.

Discussion

Gender bias in major newspaper coverage of the 1996 Olympic Games appears to be less prevalent than that found in coverage of previous sporting events reported by other scholars. For many of the variables studied, differences in representation and respect given to male and female athletes were minimal. In some cases, such as page layout and article prominence, female athletes received favorable treatment, suggesting that editors sought to capitalize on reader interest in female athletes.

Areas where gender bias against women was evident related to the more frequent mention of marital status; good looks from a male gaze; emotionality of female athletes; and the assignment of stories along gender lines. In other areas, such as mention of physical weakness and past successes, gender bias was minimal, reflected less than ten percent more frequently for women. Positive findings for female athletes included equal likelihood of being characterized as aggressive,

proportionately greater incidence of martial language, and greater likelihood of being photographed in active stances and engaging in sport. Equally notable is the lack of bias found in areas noted by previous scholars: females were not overrepresented in "feminine" sports, glamorized in photography, or the subject of gender-marking. Parental status was slightly more likely to be mentioned for males.

These favorable findings are particularly significant because more than half of all of the articles studied were written by male reporters. Several remarkable examples of bias notwithstanding, this study provides a more positive milestone in the gender bias literature than previous inquiries. Perhaps one reason for this is that the quantitative analysis forces the researcher to "count" both the presence and absence of bias; previously employed methodologies, such as rhetorical analysis, lend themselves to critical analysis of the most biased passages and images.

However, these findings should not be interpreted as a cause for celebration. It should be remembered that at no other time does public interest in female athletes peak as high as during the Olympic Games. Beyond these two weeks every four years, the treatment of female athletes, particularly in terms of quantitative representation and representation in "non-feminine" sports may decline. An interesting follow up study might compare the levels of representation and respect accorded to female athletes during the Games with those in the weeks and months after the Games. One might expect that as public interest wanes, so would the nonstereotypical treatment of female athletes.

It must be noted that stereotypical treatment may be brought about by athletes themselves and their agents, who find that emphasizing their "otherness" through appearance may be an effective publicity ploy (i.e., distinctively long, elaborately decorated fingernails.) Female athletes may unwittingly encourage stereotypical reporting by making comments which reflect traditional stereotypes of women, for instance, swimmer Janet Evans' previously noted comments to a reporter longing for smaller muscles, sundresses and shopping with her mother.

However, the role of the reporter is critically important in framing issues related to gender in sport. The lack of correlation between gender of reporter and instances of bias suggests that female reporters bear the responsibility for some of the stereotypical writing found. This is evidence of the profession's continuing need to educate reporters as to common sources of gender bias in journalistic writing. The fact that gender bias against female athletes is not intentional does not make it any more acceptable.

Additional studies of newspaper coverage of female athletes are needed to determine whether the positive findings of this study are part of a larger trend of growing interest and acceptance of female athletes, or just a blip on the screen that coincides with the Olympic Games.

ENDNOTES

1. Women were barred from competition in the ancient Olympic Games, and again in the first modern games in 1896. Baron Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympic movement, resisted the idea of female participation, envisioning the Games as "an exaltation of male sport" (Rosen, 1996c). In 1900, however, 11 women were permitted to compete in golf and tennis. In 1928, after the reported collapse of several female runners, women were nearly banned from Olympic sport as a health risk. Although the attempt to oust women failed, women were not permitted to run an Olympic race longer than 200 meters for 32 years (Rosen, 1996d). Inequities persisted in 1996. According to the U.S. Olympic Committee, there were 63 more medal events for men than women. Because of this, within the same sport, women's teams may be limited to a smaller roster than men's teams. For example, the international cycling federation allowed each country to send only two female track cyclists to Atlanta, while men's teams were permitted to send nine (Rosen, 1996b). Women remain barred from Olympic wrestling, boxing, modern pentathlon and weightlifting. According to the U.S. Olympic Committee, 27 countries, including Saudi Arabia, send no female athletes to the Olympics because their participation necessitates violating Islamic dress codes.

Gender imbalances are also visible within the Olympics organizing body itself. As of 1996, the International Olympic Committee included only seven women among its 106 members, and had ignored requests to take action against countries that discriminate against women – unlike its policy banning South Africa from competition because of apartheid (Olympics show progress but not yet equality, 1996).

2. Male domination of sport has come under increasing scrutiny since the 1970s. Feminist scholars see sport as a powerful institution which contributes to the social construction of a male-dominated gender order. For instance, feminist critiques of sport have pointed to the link between sport and cultural definitions of masculinity:

> Sport has traditionally been a male preserve, encouraging segregation by gender and the socialization of boys to learn socially-valued "masculine" traits such as aggression, competition, control of emotions and physical pain, and male solidarity (Sabo, 1993).

Equally importantly, the gender order is communicated by the exclusion, segregation, and trivialization of female athletes. According to Sabo (1993), women have historically been excluded from sport by myths of female frailty and psychological weakness, and denied access through lack of financial and moral support for participation. "Sport has been coopted by males as their territory, and women are effectively excluded. . . from sport which encroaches on the male domain" (Dorris, 1996, p. 8).

3. The Wall Street Journal had the largest circulation of U.S. dailies in 1995, at 1,780,422, but was not included in this study because of its primary focus on business matters rather than general news.

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Evaluating the Public Information Function: How Media Agents Framed the Silicone Breast Implant Controversy

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ABSTRACT

Public information officers work to develop and transmit policy actors' frames through the media to the public. We examined their effectiveness during the 1991-91 silicone breast implant controversy, which involved a major corporation, the medical community, and citizens' activist groups. After determining policy actor frames via press releases, we analyzed their occurrence in six major newspapers. Medical community's frame occurred most frequently and centrally in news coverage, while activists remained on the margin of discourse.

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Public opinion can be shaped through the news media's coverage of controversial events, particularly when those events involve the juxtaposition of corporate profit, government interest, and public risk. As Bernays (1961) noted, public opinion is vital to corporations and organizations that seek to understand and shape the pulse of their constituencies. When the policy actors involved have direct access to the news media via their own public information officers, they have the opportunity to communicate their side of the conflict to the public. The ability to frame an issue is especially important in controversy surrounding potentially dangerous scientific or medical matters, which are inherently complex. In communicating information through interviews, press conferences, and press releases, public relations practitioners can transmit their organizational policy actors' frames. Thus, media agents – both the policy actors' public relations officers who write the press releases and the journalists who write the newspaper articles – are capable of impacting the public's frame of reference.

The purpose of this study is to determine how media agents, including public information officers representing three policy actors, attempted to mold public opinion via six major newspapers during the 1991-92 silicone breast implant controversy. Moreover, the study presents a unique method of evaluating public information officers' success in fulfilling the public information model of one-way symmetric communication (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Where previous research has examined the PIO's attainment of media coverage through traditional content analyses methods of counting occurrences of news stories and/or number of press releases used (see, for example, Baxter, 1988; Turk, 1986, 1988), this study will employ a computerized content analysis method that develops "frames" or messages for each of the policy actors based on their press releases; these frames are then traced through major newspaper coverage to determine how well and how often they appeared.

Background

During a lawsuit in December 1991, Dow Corning was forced to release sensitive internal memorandums implying that it had not properly tested the silicone breast implants before distributing them for widespread use. Women who received the implants have long complained of health problems, most notably relating to their auto-immune systems. After conducting an investigation, the Food and Drug Administration placed a moratorium on this product in February 1992 after determining the implants were dangerous based on data submitted by the manufacturers. The FDA posited the data "did not provide reasonable assurance of safety" in the areas of: implant rupture; gel bleeding and the potential of silicone migration throughout the body; chemical information of silicone and silicone gel; toxicity regarding the immune system, cancer and birth defects; tumor detection; and psychological issues (Vasey & Feldstein, 1993). Hoping to end the controversy, Dow announced in March 1992 that it would cease implant production. Examination of this controversy offers an interesting case study in news framing because it placed the media in a delicate position between the corporate world, the public and the U.S. government. In the past, critics have charged the news media with handling business and government interests too gingerly (Gitlin, 1980; Herman, 1995).

The term "framing" has a long history in mass media research, and its meanings have been varied. In general, however, it refers to selecting and emphasizing certain aspects of experience or ideas over others. Framing occurs as journalists "select some aspect of a perceived reality and make [it] more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). As Entman (1991) notes, frames in the media emerge as the presence or absence of certain key words, sources of information and sentences that form thematic clusters. Mass media scholars have long argued that it is important to understand the ways in which journalistic framing of issues occurs because such framing impacts public understanding and, consequently, policy formation (Gans, 1979; Gans, 1983; Gitlin, 1980; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Tuchman, 1978). In the realm of health policy formation, media framing may have a large impact on public health (Walsh-Childers, 1994).

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The way in which public health and/or risk issues are framed is particularly important because, through their style of presentation, "the media may affect the nature of regulation, the course of litigation, or the direction of research and development" (Nelkin, 1989, p. 54).

Entman (1993) posits that "the frame in the news is really the imprint of power – it registers the identity of actors or interests that competed to dominate the text" (p. 53). Examining frames based on the messages that public information officers disseminated, then, provides a means of evaluating the success of this one-way communication. Moreover, analysis of frames can suggest the extent to which the media imprint their own power on issue coverage.

The identity of dominant actors depends upon the topic and upon those individuals or organizations whose influence has the power to affect not only public opinion, but policy as well. Extrapolating from Gans's (1979) notion of policy agents, we will refer to these dominant parties as policy actors. Policy agents are news executives that have the ability to "intervene in the news whenever they choose to" (Gans, 1979, p. 84). Policy actors are entities – such as government agencies, large corporations, elite professional organizations and even citizen-activists – who are outside the media but, because of their size and influence, also possess the ability to intervene in the production of news. Policy actors employ public information officers to communicate their frames. In the silicone breast implant controversy, the major policy actors can be identified as Dow Corning, the largest manufacturer of the implants; medical groups, whose interests include both public health and their financial welfare; and citizens' activist groups, whose allegations against the FDA and implant manufacturers incited the controversy.

This study seeks to determine the extent to which the news media relied on the frames the policy actors provided in reporting the different facets of the silicone breast implant controversy. The salience of the frame in the text should reflect the policy actor's influence on the news coverage. Our

analysis will examine the frames defined through the policy actors' press releases and those constructed by the journalists.

Literature review

While little research has been conducted on media coverage of the silicone breast implant controversy, scholars have investigated how the media have framed other health-related issues. It is possible to extrapolate information from these studies, but the breast implant conflict possesses its own set of unique problems such as the debate over women wanting cosmetic breast enhancements to achieve a personal sense of physical attractiveness versus societal pressures associated with needing reconstructive surgery after a mastectomy in order to alleviate the feeling of lost femininity. This issue is unique since it is one of only a few health risk controversies that are entirely associated with women. Also, the issues juxtaposed the interest of powerful groups -- the public, the corporate world, the medical profession and the government. The journalists' choice of frame was particularly crucial in shaping public opinion since the media controlled the information being disseminated from the policy actors to the public through news stories.

The notion of story frame is taken from the work of Tuchman (1978) on the social construction of reality accomplished within media accounts. Certain pieces of information are selected and put together within the specific genre constraints of a news story. These journalistic choices, made on the basis of news values as well as journalists' interpretations of responsibility to society, do have consequences. Through complex processes of interpretation, readers form impressions of the news stories' central theme/issue and attitudes toward the policy actors (Hornig, 1990, p. 768). Although story frame characteristics can influence reader interpretations of different kinds of stories, scientific stories are distinct because readers often have limited access to expert opinion leaders to help them interpret the information (Turner, 1986). When journalists digest science and technology in their stories, the public is more likely to understand complex issues than through their own direct personal experience. For the most part, the media are the public's only contact with technical fields.

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Journalists can be perceived as brokers, "framing social reality and shaping the public consciousness about science" (Nelkin, 1989, p. 54). Through their representation of news stories, journalists suggest attitudes and opinions for the public.

In examining media coverage of the silicone breast implant controversy, we assume the public used newspapers as a source of information. A study on how Americans educate themselves about science found newspaper reading was positively related to informational scientific knowledge (Ressmeyer & Wallen, 1991). The concept of newspapers being involved in telling the public what to think about is well documented in the voluminous agenda-setting research (Protess & McCombs, 1991). The media may not tell people what to think, but they do tell people what to think about. In turn, public relations can provide information subsidies to the media in the hopes of setting their agenda (Turk, 1986). Thus, the media set the agenda for society and create the boundaries within which debate can take place. The media tend to reinforce conventional definitions of health problems and hence they determine the legitimacy of the various solutions. As noted by Winsten (1985), news stories about medicine "may increase or diminish the willingness of individuals to present themselves for care, and raise expectations, and dash hopes, or may provoke alarm" (p. 7). Nelkin (1987) posits that people assimilate media information about health-related issues in a variety of ways depending on their previous experiences, so media framing is important to the extent that it makes isolated incidents related in the form of public issues.

Media coverage of controversial technologies have a tendency to highlight competing interest of the policy actors through disputed data and opposing judgments about the risks. When scientists are identified as one of the policy actors in a debate they are perceived as "the source of authoritative evidence and definitive solutions" (Nelkin, 1989, p. 55). However, if the media did not explore scientific issues involving health risk disputes or the methods of risk, the public would be left with little or no basis for making meaningful judgments about competing allegations made by different policy actors. Thus, medical professionals, including doctors and research scientists, are granted expert

status in health risk conflicts such as the silicone breast implant controversy.

Since information is perceived as power, policy actors -- such as business, bureaucracies, doctors, scientists and activists -- strive to shape or use it in order to promote their own agendas. By possessing a monopoly or near-monopoly on information provided to the media in the form of press releases, which affect the dissemination of the news stories, policy actors can render a certain degree of control over the public (Kotulak, 1989).

Method

Our analysis of the extent to which policy actor frames appeared in major newspaper coverage of the silicone breast implant controversy consisted of two steps. First, we determined the three frames – those of medical groups, citizens' activist groups and Dow Corning – based on unique terms in the press releases each produced. Secondly, we coded the newspaper articles for both frequently occurring terms and the policy actors' frames, then used a computerized concept-mapping program to determine the relationship between the frames and other concepts in the news coverage. These steps are derived from Riechert's (1996) frame-mapping method.

Constructing Frames. To examine how the policy actors involved framed their positions, we obtained all 27 press releases containing the words "silicone breast implant" available on the PR Newswire during the three-month period from Dec. 20, 1991, to March 20, 1992. This period begins with the lawsuit in which Dow Corning was forced to released internal memos regarding allegedly improper testing and ends with Dow's announcement that it would cease implant production. Dow Corning distributed 16 releases; medical groups five; and six releases came from citizens' activist groups. The medical groups' press releases originated from hospitals and clinics, with one release from the California Society of Plastic Surgery. Two activist groups were the most active in disseminating press releases – the Citizens' Coalition for Truth in Science and the Citizens' Commission for Human Rights – and one release came from the American Cancer Society. We submitted the press releases for

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each group separately to a computerized content analysis program that calculated the most frequently occurring words in the releases for each group (Miller, 1993).

For each group, we selected the most information-rich terms that occurred more than once in the data set, then eliminated those that were not unique to the group's releases. For example, "implant" is one of the most frequently occurring terms in all three policy actors' releases, so it would not be able to define any of the groups' frames. These sets of terms were then coded into the frames for each group, as shown in Table 1. Eighteen terms comprise the Medical Groups' frame, most of which reflect medical procedures. This frame focuses on alternatives to silicone breast implants, such as the tram flap (which involves moving skin from the abdomen to the breast) and saline or saltwater implants. The Citizens' Activist Groups frame consists of 16 terms reflecting their call for a ban on the implants and their criticism of the FDA's handling of silicone breast implants and sleeping pill Halcion. Dow Corning's frame, which includes 25 terms, focuses on the internal documents it disclosed and includes the names of Dow's executives and scientists.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

News Coverage. Because the press releases must reach an audience in order to affect public opinion, we obtained all news stories containing the words "silicone breast implant" from six major newspapers (*USA Today, New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun-Times*) for the three-month period. These newspapers were selected on the basis of availability and size; all were listed in the Audit Bureau of Circulation's list of the 10 newspapers with the highest circulations for 1995. Opinion pieces and financial news stories were not included. This data set consisted of 106 news stories. We submitted the news stories to the computerized content analysis program to obtain the most frequently used terms, then created a search list using 171 of those terms after eliminating any that appeared in the policy actors' frames. This process allowed us to examine frames related to other issues not covered by the press releases, which is important because the FDA communicated to the news media primarily through press conferences or interviews.

The content analysis program then produced unstandardized eigenvectors for each of the terms based on their co-occurrence within stories. We cluster-analyzed the terms to determine frames appearing in the news coverage, using hierarchical clustering with the cosine method. Ten frames emerged from the news stories. (See Table 2.) These will be discussed further below.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Finally, we created a search list to code frequency of occurrence for each of the news frames and the policy actors' frames. Unstandardized eigenvectors were used to plot each of the frames in three-dimensional space to better illustrate their co-occurrence.

Results and Discussion

We examined the media agents' treatment of the silicone breast implants by both frequency of occurrence and co-occurrence. First, we plotted the number of newspaper articles that appeared each week during the three-month period in order to better see the pattern of coverage. As shown in Figure 1a, news coverage of the controversy first began to increase during the week of January 4-10, 1992, when the FDA called for a moratorium on production and sale of silicone breast implants. Coverage decreased slightly in the next week, then rose again January 18-25 when the FDA asked Dow Corning to release internal documents regarding testing, and Dow agreed to do so. News coverage of the controversy peaked in February 15-21 as the FDA held hearings on the safety of silicone breast implants. Figure 1b charts press releases disseminated by the three policy actors through the period. By comparing these two charts, it appears that the press releases in and of themselves did not drive news coverage: The frequencies of press releases and news stories do not follow the same patterns, nor is there a time-lag effect that would suggest news stories following up on press releases. We should note, though, that merely examining frequency of news stories and frequency of press releases provides a very rough estimate of how the controversy was framed. Nonetheless, the timelines illustrated in Figure 1a-b allow us to better understand the policy actors'

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involvement in the issue over time, and the pattern of news coverage suggests that the time frame studied here is valid.

FIGURE 1a-b ABOUT HERE

Although we derived the policy actor frames from their press releases, the policy actors were able to use additional means of communication in disseminating their frames to the media. Public information officers regularly employ a variety of tools to get their message out to the public. Press conferences, individual interviews and statements made during trials or hearings are not easily obtainable for analysis, however. Nonetheless, given the short time frame involved and the relatively small number of people cited as sources in the press releases and news stories, there is little reason to believe that the information from these other communications would differ substantially from that contained in the press releases. Thus, a more comprehensive illustration of the extent to which policy actors' frames were transmitted through newspapers is found in Figure 2, which shows the frequency of occurrence of each frame during the period. Because the frequency depends in large part on the amount of terms comprising the frames, we standardized the frames by dividing each by the number of words in it.

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

It appears that Medical Groups had the most success in placing their frame into news coverage, especially within the first month of the controversy. During this month, the risks involved with silicone breast implants were being defined after a member of the FDA's advisory panel charged Dow Corning with withholding information on the implants' potential side effects. As Figure 2 shows, the occurrence of the Medical Groups' frame during the first month of coverage far exceeds that of the other two policy actors. This suggests that the medical community exerted some influence over framing of the silicone breast implant controversy itself, having obtained the opportunity to outline its frame of reference early on. Medical Groups' dominance of the coverage during this time – and,

indeed, throughout the three-month period – is likely due to journalists' tendency to rely on scientists or other experts for coverage about complex issues involving risk.

Dow Corning and Citizens' Activist Groups are covered at about the same overall level of frequency, but the patterns of their coverage differ. For Dow Corning's frame, news coverage is quite sporadic. During about half of the weeks in the population, no terms from Dow Corning's frame appear in the news stories, but when coverage does occur, the terms are used frequently. The highest peak in Dow's coverage appears just after January 14, 1992, when two newspaper articles reported that the corporation had released an independent study that found silicone breast implants to be safe. This is an example of event-driven coverage in direct response to a policy actor's influence: Although the study's findings may have been newsworthy, the timing of its release and its framing were controlled by Dow Corning. For the rest of the period, Dow Corning's frame mirrors that of the other two policy actors until the last week of the controversy, when Dow announced it would cease production of the implants.

Coverage of the Citizens' Activist Groups' frame is comparatively more stable. Some mention of the terms it comprises appears nearly every week during the period, but the activists groups do not achieve the same levels of coverage accorded the corporate and professional policy actors at any given time. The Citizens' Activist Groups' frame peaks once, around January 26, 1992. Two events occurred then in fairly rapid succession that explain the sudden rise in coverage of this frame. First, on January 22-23, the FDA asked Dow Corning to release internal documents regarding the safety of silicone breast implants, and Dow agreed to comply. The FDA's safety concerns were voiced in much the same language as that activists groups used in their press releases, increasing the level of coverage of their frame. Second, two news stories appeared on January 26 addressing "consumer groups'" concern over the FDA's ability to protect the well-being of the American public, using the sleeping drug Halcion and silicone breast implants as examples. The peak of news coverage of the activist frame corresponds with the week with the highest number of press releases from Citizens' Activist Groups.

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Whether the activist groups' concerns would have received this level of attention without the FDA's involvement in the implant investigation is, unfortunately, not an empirical question. That the Citizens' Activist Groups frame received minimal coverage for the vast majority of the period should not be surprising, given their relative lack of organizational definition – for example, none of these groups can be identified as affiliated with a large, nationally recognizable entity such as a global corporation or an esteemed professional association, which would automatically qualify them as expert sources. It is also likely that many of the activist groups do not have public relations resources comparable to the other policy actors in this study.

Frame mapping. After examining the frequency of the frames' occurrence, we analyzed the co-occurrence of both policy actors' and news frames. The policy actors' frames appear to be quite distinct in the news coverage. Frames unique to the newspapers are most central to the discourse, while the policy actor frames are located on the periphery of discussion. These relationships are illustrated in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

Medical Groups is at the center of the frame map, though the large value of its first eigenvector – as shown in the height of the cluster – suggests it is not closely related to most of the news frames. The nearest frame is Risks, which describes the pain, complications, danger and death that can result from silicone breast implants. It also contains the words choice, size, sue and breasts. The proximity of these two frames suggests that medical experts may have been used as sources for such information in the newspaper coverage. Media agents (including both the public relations practitioners who wrote the press releases used to form the Medical Groups frame and the journalists who wrote the newspaper articles) seemed to associate physicians with the type of information that they might give as background to patients. Reinforcing the notion of medical practitioners as expert sources is the proximity of the Experts cluster to Medical Groups. In addition to the words expert and experts, this frame contains government, industry, manufacturers and medical. Thus, the frame's close association

with Medical Groups supports the contention discussed above that journalists – and, in turn, the public – grant physicians expert status in matters of health and science. While this may be a natural tendency given physicians' knowledge of these areas, perhaps the media would better serve the public by taking into account as well the Medical Groups' vested financial interest in the issue.

The frame map shows that Plastic Surgery is more closely related than to the Medical Groups frame than is Side Effects. Plastic Surgery contains the words breast, cancer, mastectomy and reconstruct, which reflect one use of silicone breast implants. The other main use is illustrated by the words cosmetic, voluntary, enlargement and Cole (Dr. Norman Cole was the president of American Society of Plastic Surgery). The Side Effects frame discusses the diseases that can result from silicone breast implant leakage – auto-immune, scleroderma, lymph, rheumatoid and inflammation. The finding that the Medical Groups' frame tends to co-occur with Plastic Surgery rather than with Side Effects suggests the dual nature of the medical community's interest in silicone breast implants. If plastic surgery was not a lucrative business, perhaps Side Effects would be more closely related to Risks and Medical Groups.

Dow Corning's frame lies on the far right edge of the frame map, and it appears to be the most distant cluster from Medical Groups, which indicates that the two policy actors were not at all associated in the news coverage. Instead, the text suggests that they may have been positioned as opponents in the coverage. Not surprisingly, the nearest news frame to Dow Corning is Dow Investigation, in which journalists disseminate the information surrounding the allegations of improper testing. Terms included are investigation, memos, McGhan Corp. (another implant manufacturer), makers and research, which explain the reason for the FDA's investigation. Background information includes the words animal, testing, shell, envelope and bleed; the internal memos discussed the fact that silicone bled through the shell (also called envelope) of implants during tests on animals. Because much of this information came from Dow, it afforded the corporation power over its image – even despite Dow's apparent unwillingness to release the internal documents.

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The close proximity of the two clusters involving Dow Corning indicate that both media agents framed the corporation in very similar ways.

On the other hand, the third policy actor – citizens' activist groups – appears to have had little influence on newspaper coverage. Its frame falls on the left edge of the frame map, quite separate from most of the news coverage. Indeed, the nearest news frame to Citizens' Activist Groups is Hospital, which contains only the words bodies and hospital. (The Hospital cluster seems to be a fragment of terms that co-occur with several other frames, making it somewhat multicollinear.) The distance between Citizens' Activist Groups and other frames suggests that this policy actor had little influence over news coverage, as its frame was not closely tied to any constructed by journalists. If the activists are not allowed voice in newspaper reports, they will have little opportunity for influencing public opinion.

Allegations is the next closest frame to Citizens' Activist Groups; it includes the words public, liability, secrecy, Talcott (the former Dow employee who charged the corporation with improper testing) and adverse. This frame describes the charges that the activists made against Dow Corning – and, to some extent, their criticisms of the FDA. Each of the frames with negative values on their first eigenvectors (as shown by their downward projection from the plane in the frame map) deal with Dow Corning and questions of its integrity in its handling of silicone breast implants. Thus, Citizens' Activist Groups and Dow Corning occupy diametrically opposed positions on the frame map, with Allegations and Dow Investigation falling between them.

The lone news frame in the lower center of the frame map, Plaintiffs, contains the names of activists and women who filed suit against Dow. This frame's distance from the discourse suggests that it is covered merely tangentially, as if the specific women harmed by silicone breast implants are of little interest in the controversy compared to the high-stakes conflict between the medical profession, the corporate world (and its inherent effect on finance) and government's role in society. Because the

silicone breast implant controversy centered almost entirely on women's health and their efficacy in making choices that impact their bodies, this marginalization is particularly disturbing.

Conclusion

Our findings suggest that policy actors in the silicone breast implant controversy were able to frame their positions in distinct ways, with their perceived level of expertise related to the frequency and centrality of their frames in the news discourse. Medical Groups seem to have exerted the most influence over news coverage, as shown by the frequency of mentions of terms in their frame and the central location of their frame on the map of news coverage. This finding suggests that journalists tended to rely upon the expertise of the medical community for background, at the least, but our frame map indicates that medical groups were closely associated with many of the other concepts discussed in the news stories. Thus, the traditional reliance of journalists upon scientists and doctors in framing risk seems to be evident in the silicone breast implant controversy. Because doctors were not merely objective commentators on this issue, given their financial interests in it – particularly among plastic surgeons – journalists should examine the type of influence over coverage (and, thus, over public opinion) that they allowed doctors in this case.

Dow Corning also had a large financial interest in the silicone breast implant controversy, but its frame was not transmitted into news coverage as frequently nor as centrally. Dow appears to have been granted the opportunity to shape its version of the controversy surrounding its investigation, to some extent, but for the most part the corporation's frame was on the periphery of discourse. Journalists may have developed a skeptical attitude toward big business, especially considering the charges made by activist groups, or sensed the possibility of an important investigative report. One reason for this attitude is the fact that Dow's frame focused on financial implications and scientific studies, which isolated its frame from other news coverage. If this is accurate, we suggest that information from the medical groups should have been treated with the same skepticism. Perhaps,

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however, the public information officers working for medical groups were able to better disseminate their message by coinciding with the media's preconceived frames.

Citizens' Activists Groups seem to have had little influence over news coverage; indeed, their frame and those news frames tangentially associated with them (Allegations, Plaintiffs) are distant from the discourse. Because the activists' frame focused on protecting consumers and criticizing large entities such as the FDA and Dow Corning, this finding suggests that journalists tended to have little interest in reporting allegations against those institutions. Rather, news frames seem to reflect an attempt to report news in a straight-forward, factual manner without connecting organizations, actions and implications. Thus, Plastic Surgery is separate from Side Effects; Plaintiffs are removed from Allegations and Lawsuits; Dow Corning is far from FDA Hearings.

These findings offer insight into the public information model of public relations, in that the levels of acceptability and established societal power granted an organization may well affect the effectiveness of its public information strategy. Clearly, a news release originating from a respected organization(s) such as the medical community will be more likely to garner journalists' attention. On the other hand, active publics such as the citizens' activist groups studied here – usually quickly organized constituencies with loose public information services – may need to find more proactive strategies of obtaining media coverage. It does not appear, at least in this case, that they are well able to compete for space in the public arena.

Future research should attempt to examine policy actors' frames in a variety of issues, from risk to policy formation. Our study would be strengthened by using richer, more comprehensive sources of policy actor frames, such as transcripts from press conferences, but these were unavailable.

Despite the limitations on this study, however, our findings suggest that, when faced with conflicting interests, the news media tend to rely on the frames provided by the most influential policy actors. In our society, large institutions will often be the most influential actors in a controversy because they have far-reaching economic and regulatory interests. Not coincidentally, large

institutions are also more likely to possess extensive public relations resources, which provide them the opportunity to disseminate frequent messages to a greater share of the media. If citizens' activist groups and other similar organizations must attempt to compete with such formidable policy actors in framing news coverage to shape public opinion, our findings suggest that they will meet with little success. And corporate public information officers would do well to heed Bernays's (1961) call for study of public opinion in preventing or alleviating public recrimination for irresponsibility.

Where public relations officers have an opportunity to build frames that can aid or inhibit the public's understanding of policy and health issues, they must seek creative and effective ways to transmit those frames. News media, of course, are likely to rely on tried-and-true newsworthiness values for reporting or altering policy actors' frames; it is up to public information officers to understand how they can succeed in maintaining their frame's integrity. The danger in the news media's reliance on influential policy actors to frame issues lies in removing the public voice from public opinion.

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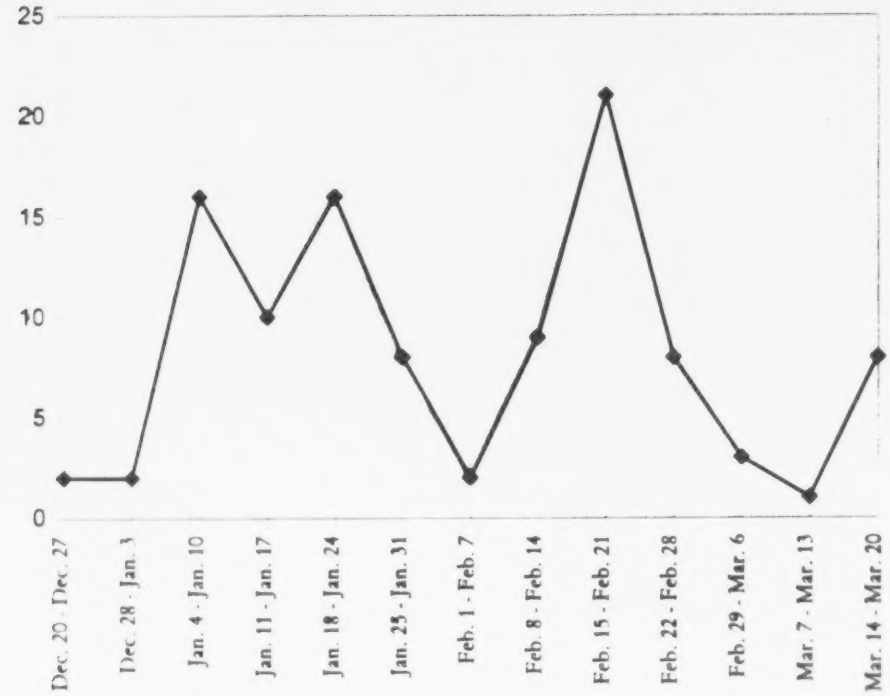
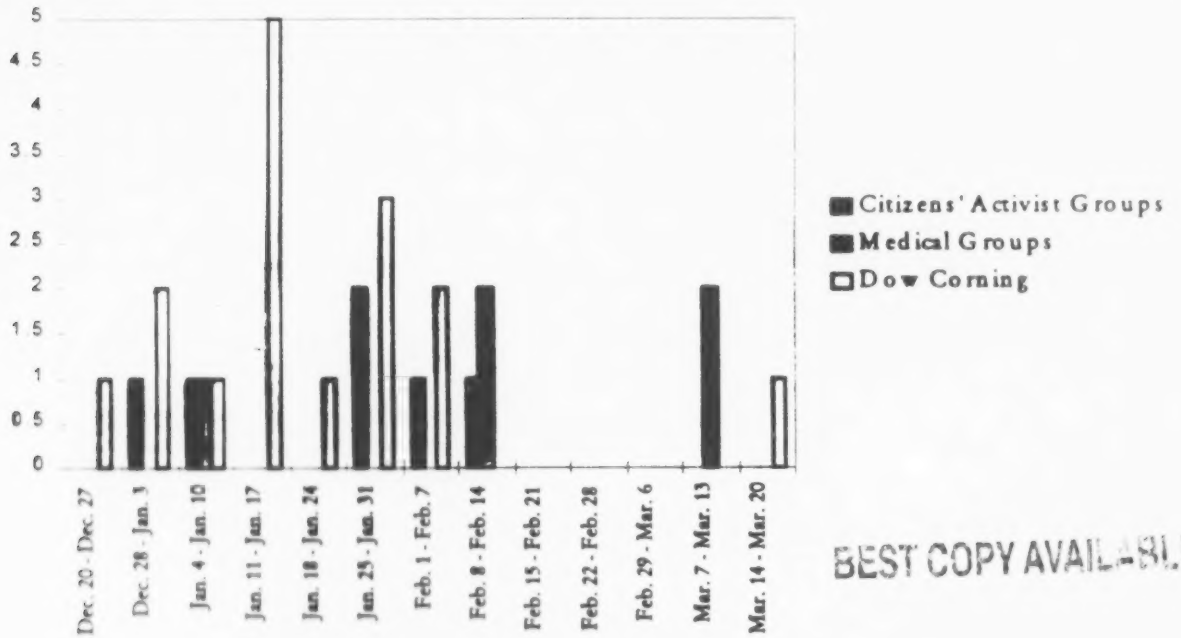
Figure 1a-b. Time plots of news coverage (1a) and policy actors' press releases (1b).



1a. Number of news stories appearing in six newspapers.



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1b. Press releases released by policy actors.

Figure 2. Occurrence of policy actors' frames in news coverage, December 20, 1991 to March 20, 1992.

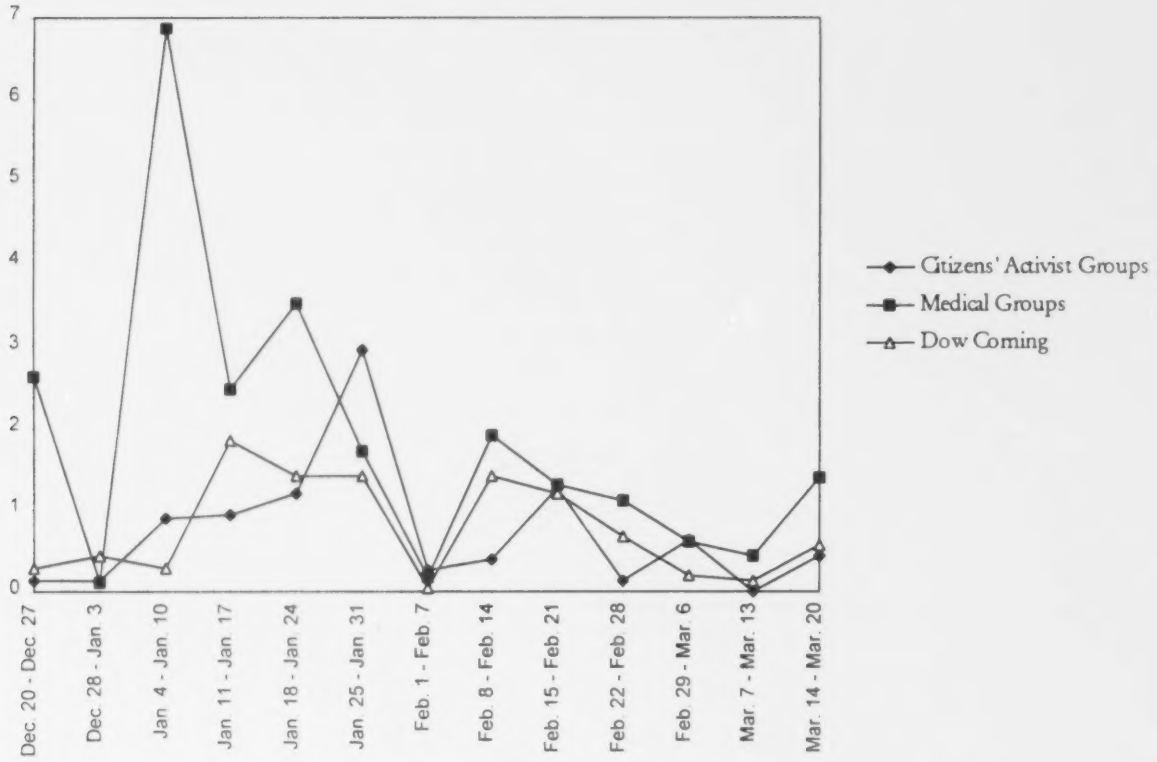

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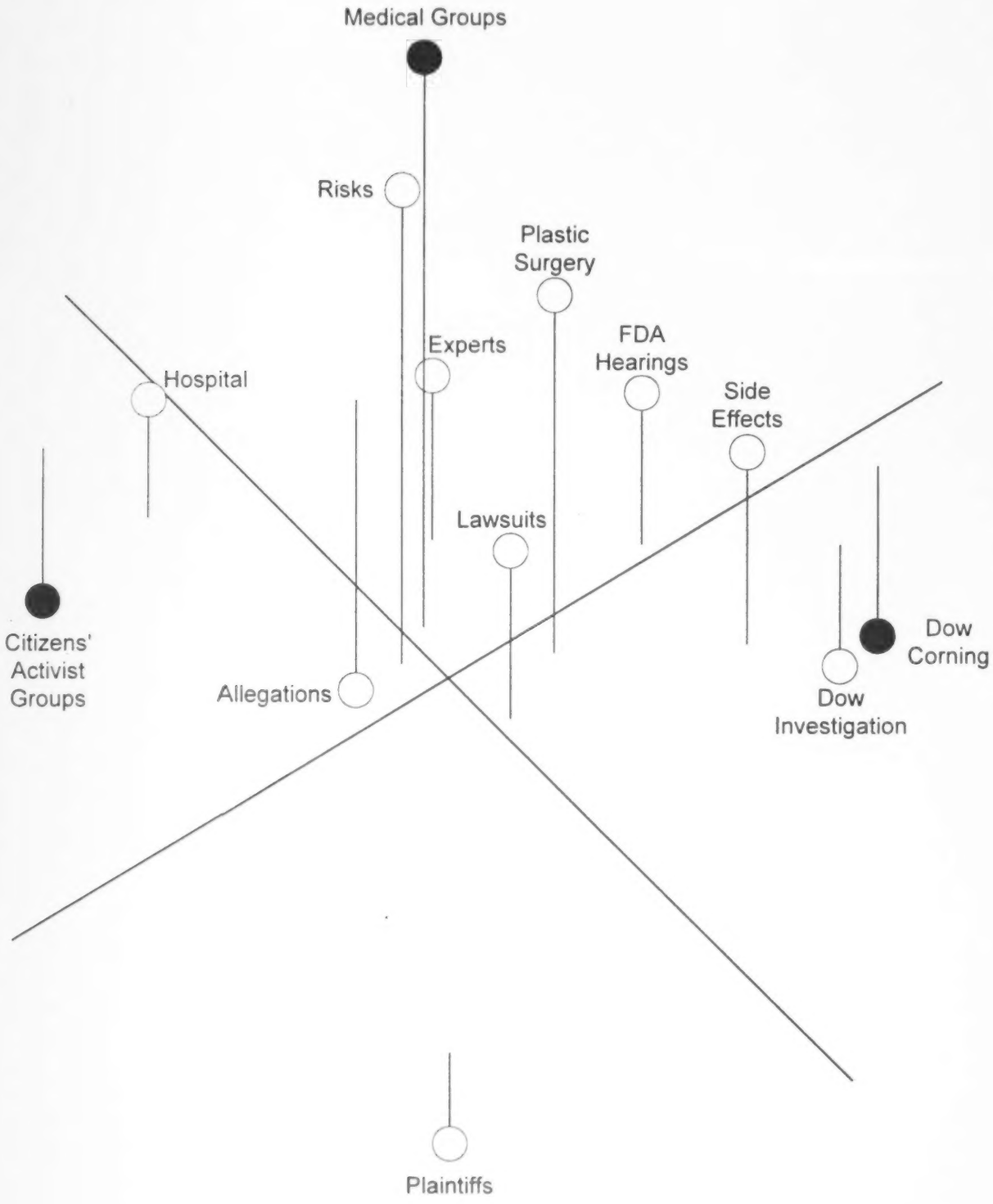
Figure 3. Concept map of news coverage of silicone breast implant controversy, with policy actor frames shaded.



RUNNING HEAD: Cyber-Wimmin

Cyber-Wimmin: Co-opting the Dominant Discourse

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Abstract

I developed the following research question to guide this qualitative project: How do women get started using the Internet and what use are they making of computer-mediated communication? In order to examine this question, I joined various women-centered listservs and mailing lists, visited feminist web sites, and developed an electronic discourse with many cyber-wimmin. From this research, I discovered that women are using the Internet for computer-mediated research, social interaction and connection to a virtual community of women, feminist activism, and other uses that subvert the patriarchal social, economic, and cultural roots of computer-mediated technologies.

Cyber-Wimmin: Co-opting the Dominant Discourse

>(LA, California) Mattel announces their new line of Barbie
>products, the "Hacker Barbie." These new dolls will be released
>next month. The aim of these dolls is to revert the stereotype
>that women are numerophobic, computer-illiterate, and
>academically challenged.
>
>This new line of Barbie dolls comes equipped with Barbie's very
>own xterminal and UNIX documentation as well as ORA's "In a
>Nutshell" series. The Barbie is robed in a dirty button-up
>shirt and a pair of worn-out jeans with Casio all-purpose
>watches and thick glasses that can set ants on fire. Pocket
>protectors and HP calculators optional. The new Barbie has the
>incredible ability to stare at the screen without blinking her
>eyes and to go without eating or drinking for 12 hours
>straight. Her vocabulary mainly consists of technical terms
>such as "IP address," "TCP/IP," "kernel," "NP-complete," and
>"Alpha AXP's."

posted on womenspace@YORKU.CA Date: Tue, 29 Oct 1996

"Hacker Barbie" exists only in virtual reality. But references to women as technologically phobic and computer reticent pervade academic writings and the popular press. Although reliable numbers are difficult to verify, woman apparently are underrepresented on the net. According to two recent surveys of Internet users, 31.5% to 33% are women (http://www.cc.gatech.edu/gvu/user_surveys & http://www.nielsenmedia.com, respectively).

Within the academic community, there are abundant theories explaining the male dominance of science and technology (Byrne, 1993; Dervin, 1989; Harding, 1991; Harding & Hintikka, 1983; Harding, & O'Barr, 1987; Jansen, 1989; Kramarae, 1988; Oakes, 1990; Rakow, 1988; Shepherd, 1993; Sonnert, 1995; and Sorensen, 1992, to name a few). Feminist scholars, in particular, "have identified men's monopoly of technology as an important source of their power" (Wajcman, 1991, p. viii). Harding (1986) identifies historical barriers, oppressive patriarchal structures, male value-laden research standards, and socially/culturally embedded beliefs/knowledge as limiting women in science and technology. Other scholars have labeled technology as "powerful, remote, incomprehensible, inhuman, scientific, expensive, and -- above all -- male" (Faulkner & Arnold, 1985, p. 1).

Wajcman (1991) outlines three theoretical approaches to women's estrangement from technology. First, feminists have suggested that technology is rooted in masculine values, language, and culture. The division of labor in capitalistic societies, secondly, dictates gendered use of technology. Finally, technology has been historically constructed as masculine.

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Although feminist and other scholars have identified new information and communication technologies (NICTs)[1] as embedded in masculine, militaristic, and patriarchal industrial foundations, van Zoonen (1992) argues that these roots do not necessarily dictate the exclusion or alienation of women from these technologies. A growing number of women, in fact, are routinely using computer-mediated communication. Rather than focus on why women are excluded or marginalized from the Internet and other computer-mediated communication, this paper examines how women are co-opting this technology to create alternate discourses that subvert the patriarchal social, economic, and cultural roots of NICTs.

Rakow (1992) describes how women adapted one communication technology, the telephone, to accomplish important work in their lives (e.g., building community, maintaining family contacts, etc.). Just as the telephone is a gendered technology (Rakow, 1992), the Internet and other computer-mediated communication technologies are also profoundly gendered, in ways that historically have discouraged women's use. The development of user-friendly software and the work of computer-literate women to break down patriarchal cyberspace boundaries are contributing to growing numbers of cyber-wimmin.

I developed the following research question to guide this qualitative project: How do women get started using the Internet and what use are they making of computer-mediated communication? In order to examine this question, I joined various women-centered listservs and mailing lists, visited feminist web sites, and developed a discourse with many cyber-wimmin on why and how they use the Internet. This essay represents some of those discussions.

I recognize that, due to the exploratory nature of this research, the Internet uses I discuss in this paper are partial and do not represent all women's experiences with computer-mediated communications. These results are based primarily on fourteen self-selected women who participated in qualitative interviews I conducted via e-mail. The women in this study range from 20 to 54 years old. Ten women are Anglo, one Hispanic/Anglo, and one Native American/Anglo in origin. Nine are heterosexual, three are bi-sexual, and one is a lesbian. Eleven report living in the United States, while two reside in Australia and one in Canada. One woman describes herself as visually impaired. In order to understand intersections of race, class, ethnicity, etc. among these women, I asked them to write short bios describing themselves which appear at the end of this paper. They also chose their own pseudonyms.

Women and Technophobia

When I began collecting data for this study, I found myself hesitant and fearful of the "great unknown" of the Internet. Having read *Wired_Women* (1996)

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[1] The term "NICTs" has been cited in previous literature (van Zoonen, 1992; Frissen, 1992).

and the previously cited literature, I was aware of hackers, flaming, and other potentially intrusive and aggressive abuses women sometimes suffer on the net. Computer mediated communication seemed ambiguous, undefined, and hostile.

After conversing with women on the net, I found that my anxieties were not unique. As Kramarae (1988) suggests, the idea that technology, "is usually thought of as a masculine invention and activity" contributes to women's reticence toward computer-mediated communication technologies. One of the women who participated in this study, Lorelei, describes the "steep learning curve" of her first cyber experiences:

> The worst part was getting online at all. Working out modem dip switches, serial port capabilities, uploading, downloading etc with the old telix software all required a lot of effort from me. Not knowing the terminology or protocols of newsgroups, and reading a thousand or more times that "netiquette" required a long apprenticeship before one should dare address a group meant that my first few posts were *very* tentative, and that I didn't feel confident disagreeing with more prominent users for quite a while.

Another participant, Gobnait, similarly, writes about her experience as a newbie:

> I was dragged kicking and screaming into the 20th century by a sociology teacher who forced us to get e-mail so that she could send us info; we also had the option of doing assorted tasks on the Net insead [sic] of taking the final. I am hooked!

Lorelei and Gobnait's computer reticence, Turkle (1988) argues, is a common experience among women as they react to the alien (e.g., masculine) culture surrounding computer-mediated communication. Once they break through these initial barriers, however, women have learned to adapt the technology to their own needs or purposes, and become, in Gobnait's words "hooked."

Despite the dominant cultural discourse that apparently alienates some women, the number of women using the net continues to increase (http://www.cc.gatech.edu/gvu/user_surveys). Susan, another woman participating in this study, asserts that:

> All the hype we used to hear up until just recently about the net being a hostile place to women just infuriated me. I was having a great experience with it, and the bad rap seemed more calculated to KEEP neophyte women away rather than encourage them to use it. ...[Now] suddenly we're hearing about the net as a place that's custom tailored to women. I was predicting this all along.

The idea that the net is "tailor-made" for women is an intriguing one. Susan says that the net is not as conducive to male hierarchy, and that "female linking" rather than "male ranking" is best suited to computer-mediated technologies.

Women's Use of the Net

In order to better understand how women are co-opting patriarchal cyberspace for their own purposes, I asked the women who participated in my research what use they were making of the Internet and what computer-mediated communication meant to them. Several common themes emerged from their responses, including research, e-mail, virtual community connections, cyberspace support, feminist activism, by-passing gatekeepers, among other uses.

From my research of women-centered web sites and mailing lists, I also identified many women who are actively working to rupture patriarchal cultural barriers and bring more women on-line. Rye Senjen and Jane Guthrey, for example, wrote *The Internet for Women* (1996) to, "demystify the Internet and put it into a context that makes it relevant and accessible to as many women as possible." Other women are continually working to maintain and create web sites, listservs, mailing lists, etc. to assist, entertain, and engage women in cyberspace.

Computer-Mediated Research

Almost all of the women I communicated with for this research linked their first Internet contact with post-secondary educational environments. The majority were in graduate school or college and were granted complimentary first access as a result. So, not surprisingly, one important use these women make of the net is research. Rebecca, for example, writes:

> Doing research online has also reaffirmed my love of the net. I wrote a paper last year on images of women using computers in the mass media and sent a survey out to women all over the net. The responses I got back were really amazing. I was so touched by how many people really took the time to tell me all about their lives.

Rebecca uses the word *reaffirm*, suggesting that academic research is not her primary use of cyberspace.

The net's information resources are not simply linked to scholarly pursuits, however, as Amy attests:

> -- Anytime I need information, I go to the Internet before the library. This was helpful recently in finding other women who are trying to get pregnant, in helping a friend find the blue book value of a car she's selling, helping my mother figure out what she'd need as far as clothing and safety equipment for a trip to the Antartica [sic].

The fact that Amy is searching for "other women" rather than "professionalized" information about pregnancy suggests her feminist use of the net: She is valuing women's experiences and listening to women's voices rather than solely relying

on the dominant medical discourse. Although all of the women in this study are in some way tied to academia (either past or present)[2], their use of the net for research incorporates both academic and personal inquiries. As Amy describes, the Internet can provide important connections to other women as sources of information for their professional and personal lives.

E-mail and Social Interaction

Most of the women also described e-mail as an important way to correspond and maintain social ties with family, friends, and "strangers" all over the world. Pam describes the net as a, "Low-cost way to communicate with friends, relatives. (Wish all relatives had e-mail.)" Vivian discusses how she has met people on a listserv and even introduced her RL ("real life") friends to the virtual conversation:

> I've met a few people from [feminist listserv name], and introduced several of my church and college friends to the conversations.

The reciprocal real life and cyberspace social interactions facilitated through e-mail strengthens these women's ties to the virtual community and each other. Enid uses e-mail to socialize selectively with others:

> The internet is part of my life. It is where I get my social interaction. It means dealing with people on *my* terms. I can read mail when I want to, I don't have to sync my schedule up with my friend's in order to do something. We are very much like hermits, and don't get out into the city much.

Other women also discussed how they rely on the net to break the isolation of living in rural communities and seek Internet discourse as "urban consolation." Meg, for example, lives in a remote area in Canada. She describes her Internet use as vital to connect her to a virtual community:

> This is a homophobic area, and even thought we are both very OUT, the isolation factor is enormous, closeted queers are afraid to be seen in our company, and connecting with any kind of 'community' is impossible.... The little chime we hear when we have e-mail is a breath of life some days... On the net I can tune in to the latest adventures of the Lesbian Avengers. Need I say more?

The "impossibility" of connecting to any meaningful community for Meg is overcome through her use of computer-mediated communication.

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[2] In order to extend my dialogue with the study's participants to include discussion about the final version of this paper, I sent a copy (via e-mail) to each of the women who participated. One of the women responded to this section of the paper, replying that she had not been connected to an academic environment in decades.

This usage is consistent with what Mansbridge (1994) describes as the efficacy of the feminist movement as mutually reinforced through relationships between organizations, individuals, and discourse; isolation at any level weakens collective resistance and support. As these women testify, the Internet provides an effective method of maintaining these connections between discourse, individuals, and groups.

Using the Internet for social connections certainly contradicts the way computer-mediated communication was originally intended as a part of the military-industrial complex. Jansen (1989) describes technologies as extensions of power and capital structures that women either by-pass through alternative social networks or subvert by "mis-using" or adapting the technology to suit their alternative purposes. These women appear to be adapting the net to fulfill their needs.

Connection With A Virtual Community

Most of these women's use of the net goes beyond routine correspondence toward something deeper; a sense of intellectual and emotional connectedness that transcends geographic boundaries. Helen explains:

> I use the internet to stay connected to a broader conversation, to gain a larger perspective -- over time, I think we begin to hang around with people who think and speak like we do, or within an acceptable range.

DC adds that she uses the Internet:

> to communicate with a myriad of like-minded folk, the likes of whom I'd be lucky to find around home. I have corresponded with fellow Pagans and musicians, shared my work and that of others.

These two women demonstrate the versatility of the net to meet their needs. For Helen, cyberspace links her to a broader conversation with a more diverse group of people than she typically would interact with. In contrast, DC values her ability to seek out "like-minded folk" that are not readily available to her otherwise.

Hannah's use of the Internet combines Helen and DC's descriptions:

> my listservs provide virtual communities of like-minded people where we can discuss and debate topics of interesting and importance in our lives. I may not know what the women and men on my listservs look like, but I certainly consider them to be virtual friends whose ideas and information are important to me. .... For instance, on [a feminist] listserv, although we all express widely varying specific beliefs, we all share the "seeker" mindset - we're all interested in learning about each other's beliefs and ideas. It's not shared beliefs I look for - it's a shared desire to learn and discuss.

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All of these women choose to engage in computer-mediated discourse to share support, knowledge, and discussion with a broad range of people. Amy further describes how the Internet crosses boundaries that probably would not be traversed in real life.

> I communicate with people I will probably never meet and actually have no real need to meet. I communicate with total strangers about ideas and have no idea about their life, what they look like or whether we would even like each other in RL.

Amy's comment articulates the democratizing potential of the Internet to cross class, race, ethnicity and other boundaries (within the limitations of privilege described later in this paper).

Feminist writers have long recognized that connections based solely on biological sex (e.g., being female) do not mandate common experiences among all women. Reagon (1983) explains that women are not "acculturated to be women people, capable of crossing our first people boundaries -- Black, White, Indian, etc." (p. 361). The coalition work that needs to be done to connect this world of many peoples, Reagon argues, is even more difficult as a result. One feminist listserv FAQ ("frequently asked questions") attests to how differences between women can be celebrated on the net:

> We're a cyber-global village of many creeds, sexes, and perspectives, and we revel in our diversity.... We all respect and love each other here....we honor differences at all times.

Although it is arguable that the Internet serves as "the great equalizer," computer-mediated communication may facilitate this coalition work among women at some level.

The activist listservs, mail lists, and web pages described later in this paper further demonstrate how women are using the net to break down the barriers of nationalism and ethnocentrism. Gillian explains her experience:

> I frequent a MOO ... on several occasions that I have been there, I run into people from all over the United States -- but I also run into people from Austria, Argentina, Great Britain ... We are all thinking and reacting in real-time ... and at the same time. The same goes for chat rooms. If one enters a chat room, one may be corresponding with people from, I don't know, Brazil, Russia, Scotland, Germany, Canada, New York and Wyoming. At the "same time" -- unless you have a really remarkable conference call hook-up and much advance planning, you can't even achieve that with a telephone. But the Internet gives that too you. Look at Web pages that get hundreds of hits a day -- granted, you are not then communicating with people from everywhere, but you are all "receiving" communicative information at once. I find this to be completely awe-inspiring.

Several women that participated in my research discussed how the net serves to globalize them and create international dialogues for women.

Cyberspace Support

And from this community, women receive support, both intellectual and emotional. Internet-Women-Help, for example, is a women-only listserv devoted to helping women with their on-line computer technical questions and problems. This listserv provides a "safe" place for women to seek technical support and overcome their reticence to computers.

During my research for this project, I encountered similar exchanges of information and resources for women all over the net. For example, the following women's studies listserv supports over 4,000 subscribers located in 42 countries:

> WMST-L is an international electronic forum for people involved in Women's Studies as teachers, researchers, librarians, and/or program administrators. It offers a rapid and cost-free way for participants to ask questions and exchange information about the academic side of Women's Studies: current research, teaching strategies, useful texts and films, innovative courses, funding sources, building Women's Studies majors, minors, and graduate programs, relations between Women's Studies and other "minority studies" programs, and other academic issues.

As evident on this listserv, many of the computer-mediated connections being made often traverse geographic barriers and link women to a global community.

This cyber support is not just virtual. The nature of the support extends to endorsing women-owned businesses, sending donations or letters to women in need, etc., as the following thread from one feminist listserv demonstrates:

> Subject: Promote more woman-owned business URLs!
> >I still feel it is vital for us to support women owned businesses.
> ***
> Anyone feel like sharing some more woman-owned business URLs appropriate for the holiday shopping season? Or is this off-topic?
> ***
> Yes, yes, let's promote more women-owned businesses.
> ***

Computer-mediated communication, then, generates discussion (theory) and action (praxis) in support of women.

As far as emotional support via cyberspace, Susan explains:

> On [a feminist-minded listserv], I've seen some amazing developments. Several people have been talked through depression and suicidal periods. (I've been greatly helped, personally, so I know what it's like to be on the receiving end.) I've seen three people become homeless, and get invited to live with someone else on the list. Now there's [women's name], who's in deep trouble, and all these people are mailing money to her even though they've never met her in person. To me, this is real spirituality in action. This is true community.

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Susan details how cyber-feminists can provide mental and spiritual support for each other, as well as financial assistance for those in need.

Lorelei also emphasizes the importance of the support she receives on the Internet due to her residence in an isolated rural environment:

> Being in the house for a large part of the day is very isolating and the internet lets me contact other mothers in the same position - and confirm that the personal is political. Some of my parenting choices are considered extreme in [city name] (insisting on non-sexist behaviour, hyphenated names, homebirths, extended breastfeeding, not vaccinating etc) but are celebrated by my cyber friends. I know one other homebirther within a 200km radius, but have 50 to talk to via a listserv.

Although her community may not support her feminist parenting choices, Lorelei finds support through computer-mediated talk. If reality is constructed and maintained through talk, as Spender (1980) suggests, then feminists must continually create a discourse to confirm and reinforce non-patriarchal realities for women (e.g., Lorelei's parenting choices). Computer-mediated discourse is one way women can create and sustain such a discourse.

Feminist Activism

Lorelei confirms that "the personal is political" through the Internet. This phrase, used by Hainisch in 1970, "explained the ways that formal politics had kept off its agenda so much that was important to women" (Mansbridge, 1995, p. 28). Feminist activism, indeed, is pervasive and powerful on the net. What follows are some of the innumerable examples of feminist activism in cyberspace.

According to its founder, Barbara Ann O'Leary, Virtual Sisterhood (VS) is a mailing list and web site that:

> ... was founded on the premise that electronic communications is a powerful tool for feminists to spread the word about their ideas and work and to join together across time, space and other barriers to further their goals. Amazing online work was already underway by feminists around the world, but it seemed we needed a connecting point to meet each other, share ideas, focus attention on the work already being done and the work envisioned. Virtual Sisterhood created a network of feminists working online who had an interest in strategizing with their virtual sisters about effective ways to utilize the technology for feminist activism.

Scarlet Pollock and Jo Sutton, who currently maintain the VS web site (http://www.igc.org/vsister), concur:

> We just found great women's sites and a very supportive way of working with women from around the world. We've been incredibly impressed by how generous women are being to each other, and want to be a part of that. It gives us ideas for how to be a feminist activist using the Internet for and with women, and gives us an energy to do feminist organizing offline too.

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There are many other sites working for women's rights. Women'space is one of them:

> Women'space explores how cyberspace is being used as a powerful tool for women's activism. We aim to further women's equality, to celebrate our diversity and the things we share. Women'space promotes Internet accessibility for women. Encouraging online participation by many communities of women is part of the politics of our lives.

Another women-centered web site for the Canadian Women's Internet Association (http://www.women.ca) provides:

> ... a Community on the Internet for Canadian Women.
> The Canadian Women's Internet Association was founded to give all women both a voice and a place of their own in Cyberspace. We are here to ensure that women feel welcome and comfortable on the Internet.

The range of feminist activism on the net is vast, including: calls for papers for conferences on women, candlelight vigils across the Internet in remembrance of slain feminists, announcements of women's meetings and conferences, news on grass roots strikes and marches, protests about unfair treatment of women, exposure of human rights violations against women, references to resources and books for women, calls to action in support of women, feminist event calendars, women's newsletters and webzines, etc. Another example follows:

> I have sent the petition to almost every Canadian
> feminist I know, at home and abroad. With the miracle of electronic
> mail, we can learn to organize in creative new ways.
> posted on womenspace@YORKU.CA Date: Mon, 28 Oct 1996

The creative ways to use the Internet for feminist work are still being invented. Jane Mansbridge describes feminist identities as "created and reinforced when feminists get together, act together, and read what other feminists have written" (1995, p. 29). The Internet provides a computer-mediated forum where women can develop their feminist identities.

By-passing gatekeepers

There has been a great deal of research describing how the press "blacks-out" social movements and renders them invisible. Media play a critical role in the construction of public identities for new social movements (Barker-Plummer, 1995; Gitlin, 1980; Morris 1974; Tuchman, 1978; van Zoonen, 1992).

Morris (1973), for example, examined press coverage of the women's movement in the U. S. and Britain and identified the sparse coverage of the incipient women's movement as a "black-out" of the movement for the general public. Morris further concluded that the increased press coverage characterized the movement as more reformatory than revolutionary and that the media served "as a 'mechanism of control'" by publicizing the movement's least offensive

objectives in order to co-opt feminist ideas through respectability (1974, p. 540 - 541).

The Internet, however, provides a medium where feminists can by-pass journalistic routines which typically support the status quo (e.g., patriarchal discourse; Tuchman, 1978) through communication on the Web. An example of this on-line feminist networking follows:

> >Subject: IWTC GLOBALNET 69
> >GlobalNet 69 Follow-Up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and NGO
> >Forum on Women, Beijing 1995
> >We depend on you to share this information with your networks
> >October 28, 1996
> >Women's Actions Around the World Keep Beijing Alive!
> [this particular post includes news about women's rights in Nigeria, Afghanistan, European region, China, Asia Pacific region, and Thailand].
> posted on womenspace@YORKU.CA Date: Tue, 29 Oct 1996

Or a subject the press does not find newsworthy can be pursued by women on-line to reach an expanded audience, as with the following:

> hello. i am conducting research on women's coalitions in other industrialized countries i.e. great britain, scandanavia, and the "stop the whitewash" groups in both australia and canada, that have launched effective campaigns on the sanitary protection industry; mandating that they stop using chlorine gas to bleach their tampons--which results in unnecessary dioxin exposure. initially i learned about this subject in the feb.7 '95 issue of the village voice. however, i have not been able to locate any other sources on these women's coalitions. if anyone is familiar with this issue please contact me ASAP.
> thank you.
> posted on WMST-L@UMDD.UMD.EDU Date: Sun, 24 Nov 1996

Not satisfied with press coverage of a protest march in Canada, women on the web were able to develop a discourse reflective of their own experience:

> To: WOMENSPACE@YORKU.CA
> Subject: Re: Stories of the Metro Days of Action
>
> I was at the march on Saturday and first of all, I must say, the numbers the police gave were way off. The march had people stretched across 2 lanes, sometimes 4, from Queen's Park all the way down University Ave, across the Lakeshore all the way to the CNE and there were still buses coming in that were backed up to Highway 47. I am very upset with the way the press reported the march. (Date: Mon, 28 Oct 1996)
>
> •••
>
> To see other stories and pictures point your browsers at http:/community.web.net/action.
>
> You can add your own story or comments about how the days were covered where you live. Countering the media coverage has been important. (Date: Tue, 29 Oct 1996)

Aware of potential press "black-outs" and distortions, these women are actively working to create alternative sources of news and information about women's activism through computer-mediated forums.

Many of the women who participated in this study also expressed concern about the increasingly corporate-minded "dominant discourse." Hannah believes resources on the net can counter "our sources of information (the media) [that are] becom[ing] more corporate and homogeneous." And Susan states that:

> So at first, I regarded the net as a great way for people with more unusual ideas to connect with each other despite the geographical distances. Then the Gulf War happened and the Well opened a special list to keep up with the news. We got info directly from people who were in the thick of the action -- eye witnesses, people who were not U.S. citizens. I was astounded at how different that news was from what we were being fed on television. That's when I realized the power of the net to truly globalize us -- to give us the point of view of others WITHOUT it being massaged or censored by a corporate-driven news media. Just direct human to human communication!

According to Fishman (1982), "routine news legitimates the existing political order by disseminating bureaucratic idealizations of the world and by filtering out troublesome perceptions of events" (p. 237). By-passing journalistic routines and ethnocentric reporting practices is one important contribution computer-mediated communication has made in these women's lives.

Miscellaneous Uses

Other uses of the web mentioned by these women include: shopping, banking, telecommuting, to medicate, and for fun or pleasure. Several women cite the instantaneous nature of the net as important. Doris, for example, writes that the "rapid dissemination of information, and rapid feedback, is a big part of what makes the Internet so powerful and so enthralling." The instantaneous, international nature of computer-mediated communication may also make significant contributions to the on-line feminist activist work discussed previously.

Privilege

This paper is not just about women and the Internet. Studying "women" as an isolated characteristic is impossible. Class, race, sexual orientation, and many other intersections create each woman differently. And many of the women that participated in this study are women of privilege. The majority of them first gained access to the net as college students, so they all have obtained a level of privilege associated with education. The net itself requires literacy which again mandates educational privilege at some level.

According to a 1996 web-based survey of approximately 11,700 Internet users by the Graphic, Visualization, & Usability Center (http://www.cc.gatech.edu/gvu/user_surveys), Internet users are on average 33 years old,

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31.5% female, 87.3% Caucasian, 41.1% married, 56.5% college graduates, 8.3% disabled, with an average household income of $59,000 U. S. dollars.[3] A 1995 CommerceNet/ Nielsen telephone survey reported that one-third of web users were female, 64% of web users have a college degree and 25% earn incomes in excess of $80,000 annually (http://www.nielsenmedia.com). These demographic profiles demonstrate the multiple layers of privilege associated with most Internet users.

Some women on-line, however, will argue that the net is also democratizing at some level, as Susan describes:

> We get to share in the lives of people we probably wouldn't find it easy to mix with in the outer world – people of very different ages, different economic levels, different types of work, different sexual preferences, even different countries, and we get to know them as REAL people with hearts and souls.

Barbara Ann O'Leary further address the barriers that can be overcome through the Internet:

> Women are sharing their lives and their feminist organizing efforts. That's really what Virtual Sisterhood is about - valuing women's capacity to share their visions for a better world across barriers - so many barriers - time, space, age, culture, language group, race, sexual orientation, economic status, religious identity, etc. - using the incredible potential of electronic communications technology.

And, as other scholars describe, many are working to create access for those groups that are consistently marginalized or ignored by new information and communication technologies:

> Regarding the above-referenced subject, Project SCOPE's website at http://www.projectscope.org is particularly appropriate. I am Carolyn Manjourides, Founder/Director/President of Project SCOPE, a nonprofit developer of telecenters in rural/low-income communities worldwide to deliver education, training, economic development and community redevelopment programs with a particular focus on women and children.

As Rakow (1988) suggests, "women are creative communicators and adaptors of technologies. We as yet know little about the communication technologies they have created, the differential impact on women and men of the diffusion of technologies, and the alternate purposes to which women have put them" (p. 67). This paper has begun to explore the ways that many cyber-wimmin are co-opting computer-mediated technology for their own feminist purposes. The women who participated in this study are using the Internet in unexpected ways that contradict much of the academic literature describing women's resistance to technology (Harding, 1986; Turkle, 1988; Wajcman, 1991). I purposely restricted this research, however, to women-centered

[3] 73.4% of survey respondents were based in the United States.

computer-mediated forums. These results are not generalizable to the Internet as a whole, as Shade and We describe: "The new 'electronic frontier' is unfortunately still a very masculine dominated space, one in which many women may feel uncomfortable at the best of times" (1993, p. 13).

Women's use of computer-mediated communication, furthermore, directly relates to their education, class, race, ethnicity, sexual preference, and many other social hierarchical relations that make it impossible to isolate gender as an essentialist quality that unites all women. As suggested by this study, the Internet may provide a way for women to communicate across some of their differences by expanding their ability to meet and learn from one another. Future research should examine these possibilities.

Bios

"Amy"

I am 30, totally Caucasian, American, a "web architect" at a company that puts businesses on the Web but mainly a journalist (former newspaper reporter, B.A. in Journalism, five years as a reporter) trying out the new technology and finding new ways to present information, biding my time until writing becomes more necessary on the Web.

I am married to a man, 24, from the Dominican Republic and (if this matters) I am enlightened to the ignorance of such people as to the ramifications of this technology. I am a founding member of Webgrrls Cincinnati.

"DC"

I am 20 years old, born in Tasmania, Australia to a Dutch father and English mother. I am currently studying for a Bachelor of music, majoring in composition. I am bisexual and feminist and have an active interest in related political issues, as well as those pertainig [sic] to the enviroment [sic] (Green, in other words.) I have been strongly drawn into Pagan/Feminist spirituality in the past two years and this is a major part of my life now.

"Doris"

I am 54 years old, live in a large city in the United States, am heterosexual, married and the mother of two grown children. I am ethnically Jewish, of eastern European origins. I am a psychotherapist in private practice.

"Enid"

I live in the United States, Vermont. I moved here just over three and a half years ago from Alaska, where I'd lived for five years. I'm 31 years old and my ethnicity is "so" mixed that I can't be called anything but an American, the I suppose the most I am is German, but it's really like only 10% of me. My families have been in the U.S. as long as anyone currently alive can remember hearing stories about. In Alaska I was a professional level administrator for a federally funded state public health program. I am trying to get back into professional level administration. Currently I work as an executive secretary at an university. I took this job three years ago and stayed because of the tuition deferral benefit provided by my employer and had returned to school. I've decided that my current job is simply too

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unfulfilling to be able to stay. I wanna get back where the action is. :) I am bisexual and have had relations with women, however I have married a wonderful man and have no plans for losing him any time in the future. So I'm not "practicing" my bisexuality. Though there is some room there for polyamory within our marriage, it would take a very special person or persons. :) My husband and I will be celebrating the 8th anniversary of the day he arrived in Alaska to be with me on December 5th (we met on the precursor to AOL in the chat rooms).

"Gillian"

I'm a 27-year-old graduate student in theatre in the USA. I don't usually refer to myself with my ethnicity, but since you asked for it, I'm Caucasian. And I'm heterosexual. While we're on the topic, I'm also a married parent of a toddler. And I'm more the Internet expert than my spouse, although evidently we are the exceptions in that department.

"Gobnait"
(pronounced GOVE-na and based on a D&D character name)

I am a straight, Anglo-Celtic 35 year old woman. I am a Pagan who is training for the priestesshood--six years ago, I was a slightly backslidden Southern Baptist! I indeed live in the US, a native Tennesseean. I gave an AS in Sociology and Psych and a BA in English (minor Medieval Studies). I am a poet, a published one at that! I enjpy [sic] reading, writing, participating in Renaissance Festivals, and learning about what people believe and why they believe it. I am visually impaired, but I choose to believe that this disability is on the physical level only! I am a Seer and a Storyteller; I am a student of the Mysteries. I love poetry and camping and satiric comedy ala Beevis and Butthead, Animaniacs, and the Tick. I enjoy being different from the norm, but I am forced to hide my religious preferences from my family because they would be disturbed and worried for me. My life would be exceedingly swell, except that I am presently suffering from a chemical imbalance that acts as severe depression.

"Hannah"

I live in the USA, I'm 25 years old, German-American in origin, and a computer system administrator at a major research university in the American South. I am a married bisexual who is childless by choice. I am a feminist and a vegetarian, and an active member of the local Unitarian Universalist church. I have a Master's degree in political theory, and in my spare time I am a writer and an apprentice potter.

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"Helen"

I am a native american/white (25/75) feminist, heterosexual woman from Long Beach California, a single mother of one daughter who is 8, divorced but friendly with my daughter's dad, who was and always will be my friend. I am a graduate student in feminist spirituality at Immaculate Heart College Center, and work for pay in a corporate setting in marketing/communications. I write, and freelance in desktop publishing/graphic design, and publish a quarterly ecofeminist newsletter called Our Stunning Harvest.

"Lorelei"

I'm a 26 y.o. woman with two very small children, one husband, one dog and six chickens living in a rather isolated Australian country town. I run my husband's business, study for my BA (hons) as an external student, and spend a lot of time re-educating the anti-feminist element of our town. The internet is my passport to the outside world.

"Meg"

>(e.g., what country you live in,
Living in Nova Scotia, Canada
> what is your age,
I am 40
>what ethnicity do you consider yourself
....of European Heritage,
>what is your occupation
....an underemployed educator/counsellor
>what is your sexual orientation,
....in a committed lesbian relationship for 6 years+
> any other information you would like to include that you think is important in >defining yourself).
....living in very isolated circumstances, in an area of drastic economic depression, illiteracy and poverty.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in telling wimmin's stories to the d'homme-inant culture.

"Pam"

Bio info: US, female, 41, white, self-employed, married, heterosexual, feminist activist

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"Rebecca"

I'm a 22 year old student at a small liberal arts college in New England (USA). I'm double-majoring in Computer Science and an Interdisciplinary Major in "Technology, Society and Culture" (so I can get a technical background in CS - or as much as one can at a liberal arts college - as well as a sense of how technology is affecting the world we live in). I'm a short, straight, Jewish woman who will proudly call myself a feminist, a liberal and a Democrat. I'm still trying to figure out what I'm going to do when I graduate in May, but am having fun playing with what directions to go in next.

"Susan"

I'm a U.S. citizen, 44 years old, "white," and heterosexual. I have a B.A. in chemistry, a M.S. in materials engineering. I spent nine years as a research engineer with NASA and am currently self-employed in desktop publishing and internet website design. I've had my articles published on a variety of subjects, especially women's spirituality, and have done quite a bit of public speaking. I have a popular seminar on "The Warrior Goddess Archetype."

"Vivian"

I'm a writing professor at a small, professionally-oriented college. I joined [feminist listserv name] while I was doing my doctoral work. As for my religious background, I'm Presbyterian, though certainly a very liberal one. I joined [feminist listserv name] sometime around 1990, perhaps earlier, when it first was carried as a bitnet list on the Usenet feed at my graduate school. I'm a first generation American on my father's side [he fled Central America in the 1950's], second generation on my mother's side [her mother came over from Norway in her teens]. I'm in the States, obviously, and I love intelligent conversation. Not sure if my sexual preference is relevant for my biography, since I'm single [first I was married to my dissertation, now there's my job ;-)].

Note: The author is a white, heterosexual, graduate student in her thirties living in the United States.

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How Do Our Daughters Grow?

Adolescent Socialization Messages
in Selected Print and Electronic Media

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Adolescent and teen-age girls are regularly bombarded with messages about how to dress, look, talk and behave. From the time they are born, their parents differentiate them from their brothers (Peirce 494). The messages and expectations seem innocuous: we encourage our girls to be pretty and clean, to play house with their dolls and tea sets; we want our boys to be assertive and rambunctious, to play baseball with their bats and gloves. These gender-stereotypical messages are reinforced every day by the popular print and broadcast media (494), and are criticized by feminists who argue that such messages serve to oppress women.

Meanwhile, the Internet is emerging as a mass medium on a global scale. According to a 1995 survey, about 9.5 million Americans use the Internet — 1.1 million of these are children under 18 (Find/SVP). Slightly more than 31 percent of Internet users are female; 69 percent are male (Pitkow). Young and old alike "gather" via e-mail, newsgroups, the World Wide Web and other Internet pipelines to discuss issues, share thoughts and opinions, and receive news and information. Clearly, mass communication on the Internet has the potential to either reinforce or desist traditional socialization messages. Little information exists thus far as to what extent the gender-stereotypical messages inherent in the print media geared toward adolescent girls are replicated by their cyberspace counterparts. Because of the Internet's growing relevance, and the extent to which the mass media's gender-stereotypical messages affect adolescent girls' perceptions of their roles in society, researchers must begin to compare and examine the messages of this new electronic mass medium. This study attempts to do so, by identifying the types of information content offered by World Wide Web sites geared toward pre-teen and teen-age girls and comparing their messages to the editorial content of comparable print magazines.

Literature Review

A comparative content analysis of print and electronic magazines for girls requires an interdisciplinary review of research on gender socialization and stereotypes, the content

of women's magazines generally and girls' magazines specifically, the socialization of adolescent girls, the culture of computing as it relates to gender, and feminist perspectives on technology. This literature review begins with a discussion of traditional print media for women and girls, then moves to perspectives on the "gender" of computer technology and how these might manifest themselves in the content of the burgeoning number of electronic magazines, or e-zines, aimed at adolescent females.

Who am I?

Gender-role socialization — the process by which children learn the societally acceptable behaviors and attributes of their particular sex — begins at birth (Peirce 494). Although a few different socialization models exist, traditional socialization remains most prevalent in American society (494). Parents, teachers, relatives and friends treat boys and girls differently as infants, from their most basic physical and verbal interactions to the choice of colors for their tiny baby outfits. Later, children will receive sex-appropriate toys to play with (dolls for girls, guns for boys, for example) and, when it's time to learn to read and write, they'll be presented with textbooks that give them clues to their identities (494). During their school years, girls continue to receive subtle messages about their expected goals and roles, and tend to drift away from mathematics and the hard sciences (Hawkins 168).

> "By adolescence, both boys and girls have definite ideas about the differences between masculine and feminine behavior. This includes being good at athletics as well as math for boys and being pretty and popular for girls. In fact, the American emphasis on female beauty becomes central to a teen-age girl's life; it is the pretty girl and not the bright girl who is the most popular" (Peirce 495).

Traditional socialization messages are reinforced through popular media (495). Women's magazines generally have a long and studied history of supporting gender stereotypes, and their counterparts for teen-age girls are no exception (Wolseley 109). Even a newsstand review of girls' periodicals in a given month provides anecdotal evidence for

the stereotypical messages they impart. Consider these cover lines on the February 1997 issues of Seventeen magazine: "Does he like you? Seven ways to tell" and "Get the hair you want;" YM magazine: "A date in the next seven days, guaranteed!" and "Mega beauty: look hot all winter;" and Teen magazine: "What's your flirting style? Will it get you noticed?" and "Beauty news: the best looks and trends." American girls are inculcated with various socialization messages geared toward looking pretty and finding a boyfriend. Messages promoting feminist issues and/or concepts — such as education and career development, ideology and ethics, self-esteem and identity apart from men (Evans et al. 107, Peirce 492) — appear to be in the minority. Although few actual content analyses of popular girls' magazines have been conducted, the research that exists indicates that traditional gender stereotypes are reinforced through these periodicals' messages.

Cinderella stories

McRobbie's 1982 critical analysis of Jackie, a British teen magazine, provided one of the first indications of the ideology of femininity constructed by the genre (Peirce 496). Jackie was replete with articles on relationship problems, fashion, beauty and celebrities — a situation which, McRobbie noted at the time, would have to be addressed by feminists if its "powerful ideological force" were to be neutralized (496). American academician Kate Peirce continued McRobbie's research with her own study of messages in Seventeen, in which she found that 60 percent of the editorial content of the magazine in the years 1961, 1972 and 1985 was devoted to the stereotypically feminine topics of beauty, fashion, cooking, decorating and crafts (498). Interestingly, Peirce's data showed that the number of articles containing feminist messages of self-reliance and independence increased somewhat during the period of active feminism in the United States in the early 1970s, but had dropped back to its 1961 levels by 1985 (498) — an indication that despite the growth in awareness of feminist thought in the past 25 years, traditional messages continued to dominate the medium. In a later study of the fictional content of both Seventeen and Teen,

Peirce found that in 62 percent of the stories, the main character depended on another person to solve her dilemma (Peirce 62). She concludes:

> "By age 17, the traditionally socialized teen-age girl will have learned, from many and varied sources, that how she looks is more important than what she thinks, that her main goal in life is to find a man to take care of her financially and that her place will be home with the kids and the cooking and the housework, while his place will be wherever he wants it to be. She will have learned, too, that if she has to work (and it would certainly be better if she didn't), her job will not be as important as his, it will not pay as much as his, and she will still be in charge of home and kids. She will have been told that biological differences necessitate these gender differences and her lesser status in society" (Peirce 491).

Peirce's work is reinforced by a comprehensive content analysis of teen magazines for girls by University of Washington researchers Ellis D. Evans and Judith Rutberg and their co-authors. In their comparative review of 10 issues each of Seventeen, YM (an acronym for the full title Young Miss, which, incidentally, has since been changed to Young & Modern) and Sassy magazines, the publications' content centered primarily on self-improvement via "fashion dressing and physical beautification, with "modest attention" to relationship problems (Evans et al. 110). Fashion topics dominated the three periodicals, followed by feature articles, beauty care, entertainment stories and recurring columns. Articles about health care comprised about 5 percent of the total content (104). Not surprisingly, the themes of dating and heterosexuality dominated the identity-related feature articles in each of the three magazines; across the 30 issues analyzed, only one article specifically addressed gay relationships (105). Women, in the few instances in which they were represented as having careers, were boxed into traditional roles, such as modeling (112). There also existed a dearth of stories about important political and social issues and personal development through education and extracurricular activities, such as sports or art, the researchers noted (112). Although some of the messages seemed confusing, i.e. articles entitled "Losing Your Virginity" versus "Virgins are Cool," the dominant ideology in the analysis was evident. "Articles and advertisements mutually reinforced an underlying value that the road to happiness is attracting males for successful heterosexual life by way of

physical beautification" (110).

A new day or an old way?

A headline in a major-market urban newspaper shouts "Forget stereotypes;" the article underneath goes on to tout that "the perception that the (Inter)net is a nerd boy playground is changing" (Braddock R-1). "Girl-friendly sites" on the World Wide Web are bucking stereotypical socialization messages by encouraging young women to explore technology, write about things that are important to them and read about sports and women's history, their creators say. But are they? Is the computer culture immune to traditional gender-socialization messages that are reinforced by every other form of popular media, including the teen magazines described above? The academic research to date suggests not. "In many ways, the online world . . . has its own culture, morals and expectations, but in just as many ways it replicates the biases, contradictions and prejudices of our society" (We 1). In order to decipher the world of computer communication as it pertains to adolescent girls, we must first look at the stereotypes implicit in the use and development of the medium itself.

Women have been an integral part of the global information revolution since its beginning. Ada Lovelace, the world's first computer "programmer," wrote the instructions for Babbage's "computing machine" as early as the 19th century (Lockheed 117). Decades later, women figured in the development of programs for the 1940s computing machine ENIAC and the programming language COBOL (117). By 1980, more than half the computer operators in the United States were women; 31 percent were programmers; and 22 percent were systems analysts. Still, the world of computers has been and continues to be considered a man's domain (116).

The gender stereotyping of computers begins in homes and schools. Although the data shows that kindergarten and first-grade girls may learn writing skills on the computer at a faster rate than boys, girls' interest in computers as an educational and communicative

tool tends to decrease as they grow older (118). Simply put, girls like computers less than boys — largely because they have been socialized to perceive computers as part of an exclusive male culture (Newman et al. 326, 351). In a study of 206 first- through third-graders in New York, researcher Leonard S. Newman and co-authors found that only 70 percent of girls with a sophisticated knowledge of gender stereotypes reported a "favorable attitude" toward working with computers, despite the fact that 83 percent of participants overall said they liked computers (338). "It is a world of electronic pool halls and sports fields, of circuits and machines, of street-corner society transmuted to a terminal room. This is hardly the kind of world girls find enticing. It is a world that many girls will not enter or, if they do, it is a world in which many girls will get 'turned off'" (Kiesler et. al. 459).

Often, girls lose interest in computers around the seventh grade (Wilder et. al. 221) — just about the time they are bombarded with media messages such as the teen magazine cover lines referenced earlier in this paper. These gender-stereotyped messages are perpetuated by software manufacturers whose games and educational programs are geared primarily toward boys (Hess et. al. 200), employing traditional masculine themes of combat, war, high adventure and sports (Wilder et. al. 222). In a 1984 study, junior high school students perceived 37 percent of 75 software titles to be written mainly for boys, while only 5 percent were considered primarily appealing to girls (200, 201). The situation may be changing as the popular press reports consumer demand for "girl games;" whether feminists will view these changes as an improvement, however, remains open for debate. In December 1996, toy maker Mattel Inc. answered the call for girls' products by marketing a series of CD-ROMs entitled "Barbie Software for Girls." With the Barbie Fashion Designer product, girls ages 6 and up could design and make "cool clothes" for their voluptuous dolls (http://www.mattelmedia.com/barbie/index.html). The product flew off retailers shelves after its introduction during the 1996 holiday season, according to news reports — an anecdotal indication that traditional socialization continues in the

nontraditional computing medium. Other upstart manufacturers are beginning to market games for preteen and teen-age girls with "strong narrative story lines and characters" (Hordern 14). In spring 1997, Girl Games is expected to introduce an interactive CD-ROM called "Being Me," designed to increase adolescent's self-esteem with segments entitled "Body," "Relationships," "Future" and "Mentors" (14). Still, the song from some software makers remains the same. The software company Her Interactive recently produced a CD-ROM in which players navigate characters through a world of slumber parties, dating and shopping (14).

The new media: e-mail and e-zines

In this mostly masculine world, girls can use computers not only to play games but also to talk to each other. The Internet has given rise to new opportunities for people to communicate actively via e-mail forums and other means or receive messages passively by browsing sites on the World Wide Web. In the small body of academic research to date on gender issues in cyberspace communication, the evidence so far indicates that the same sex stereotypes found in print media may be replicated in the computer medium. In an ethnographic observation of electronic conversations on the discussion forum "linguist-l," researcher Susan Herring found that 68 percent of the messages posted by men "made use of an adversarial style in which the poster distanced himself from, criticized and/or ridiculed other participants, often while promoting his own importance" (2). Female participants were more likely to attenuate, asking questions or apologizing rather than making declarative statements (2). As Herring observed other e-mail discussion groups, she noted similar male-female dynamics. "I started to hear stories about and witness men taking over and dominating discussions even of women-centered topics on women-centered lists," she noted (2). Herring adds:

> "It wasn't until I started looking at lists devoted to women's issues, and to traditionally 'feminized' disciplines such as women's studies, teaching English as a second language, and librarianship, that I found women

> holding forth in an amount consistent with their numerical presence on the list. I also found different interactional norms: little or no flaming, and cooperative, polite exchanges" (2).

As with computer usage itself, the norms and practices of computer communication reflect a male culture (8). Subsequently — just as public recognition of the proliferation of boys' computer games prompted manufacturers to produce software counterparts for girls — male-female differences in discourse in online communication may have provided some impetus for the creation of comfortable Internet environments specifically geared toward girls. A handful of fledgling web sites now offer content designed for adolescent females. These e-zines are part of a growing culture of new media marketed to niche groups (Quittner 64).

Separate but equal?

Although women's web sites and e-mail forums provide a comfort zone for females on the Internet, Herring cautions that such "separatism" could result in the "ghettoization" of female communicators online (8). "Women must not let themselves be driven by flame throwers away from mainstream, mixed-sex fora, but rather should actively seek to gain influence there, individually and collectively . . ." (8). Conversely, other feminist researchers, in writing about the technological work environment, urge women to band together in an "idealized community" in order to counteract occupational segregation (Shade 3), and, one may extrapolate, communicative segregation. These dichotomous ideas provide little clear direction for neutralizing gender inequalities and traditional socialization tendencies on the Internet. No published academic research to date directly addresses the content and gender-socialization messages of teen e-zines. One might hypothesize that since online culture traditionally has been considered a male world that the content of girls' web sites might reflect themes that are atypical of their print counterparts. Such a comparison is the subject of the present study.

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Methodology

The methodology for this study involved selecting three popular print magazines and three electronic magazines, or e-zines, for content analysis and comparison. The primary criterion for each publication was its audience base of adolescent girls. Seventeen, YM and Teen magazines were chosen as the print subjects because they have the largest circulation rates in the genre. According to the Gale Database of Publications and Broadcast Media, Seventeen reaches an estimated 2.17 million readers; YM has 1.25 million subscribers; and Teen's audience numbers 1.28 million. Similar criteria were unavailable for e-zines, since mechanisms that count web-page "hits" — numbers that might compare to print circulation figures — are considered somewhat unreliable. Rather, e-zines chosen for study were: 1) solely electronic media (out of concern that a site with a subscription-based print counterpart might muddy the comparison); 2) oriented toward editorial content rather than product advertisements or links to extraneous web sites; and 3) published by a commercial entity (as opposed to a non-profit organization). This study will focus on Girls Interwire (http://www.girlgamesinc.com/interwire/index.html), published by multimedia software company Girl Games Inc.; Girl Tech (http://www.girltech. com/index.html), published by the software maker KidActive LLC; and Her Online (http://www.her-online.com/room.html), published by the multimedia manufacturer Her Interactive.

This study attempts to compare the editorial content of the print and electronic media in terms of its feminist ideology or lack thereof. Modeling Peirce's 1990 analysis of socialization messages in Seventeen magazine, feature articles and regular columns in each magazine and e-zine were categorized as follows: "appearance," "male-female relations," "home" and "self-development." Articles stressing traditional socialization messages, such as beauty and hair-care, heterosexual dating and sex, and household activities usually ascribed to women were considered for the appearance, male-female relations and home categories, respectively. The self-development category included stories about education, political empowerment, careers, and physical and mental health — information that

correlates with feminist messages of independence.

The raw data from the study shows the number of feature articles and columns in each category for each magazine and e-zine. This research attempted an apples-to-apples cross-comparison of the print and electronic media by calculating the percentage of editorial content in each category versus the total number of articles and columns comprising each magazine and e-zine. The February 1997 issues of each print magazine, along with the current issue of each e-zine on a random date in February, were chosen for study in order to capture, analyze and compare the editorial content at a specific moment in time.

Findings

The coding of the content showed a marked difference in editorial emphasis between the print and electronic media. The print magazines were heavily weighted toward stories and columns about appearance and male-female relations. Articles in all three print products typically offered advice on how to look good, i.e. "Mega Beauty: Look Hot All Winter," and how to get a date, i.e. "A Date in the Next Seven Days, Guaranteed!" These articles and columns clearly send a very traditional socialization message to young women: one must be attractive in order to find a man and thus achieve happiness and fulfillment in life. There were, on average, a total of 31.7 articles and columns in each print magazine. On average, there were 9.7 articles about appearance, comprising 30.6 percent of the total editorial content of the magazines; 7 articles about male-female relations, comprising 22.1 percent of editorial content; 0.67 articles about home life, comprising 2.1 percent of editorial content; and 4.7 articles on self-development topics, or 14.8 percent of editorial content. The number of stories that combined these elements or could not be categorized topically (such as horoscopes and some celebrity news) accounted for an average 5 and 4.3 stories, respectively, or 15.8 percent and 13.6 percent of editorial content. Individual results of the coding of the print magazines follow:

Group A: Print Magazines
Table 1: Content categories as a percent of total editorial

	Appearance	M-F Relatns	Home	Self Devlpmt	Combinatn	Other
Seventeen	25	21.9	6.3	12.5	15.6	18.8
Teen	34.3	25.7	0	17.1	11.4	11.4
YM	32.1	21.4	0	14.3	21.4	10.7

The data from the electronic magazines tells a much different story. In this medium, the messages on average were heavily weighted toward self-development. Articles covered topics ranging from how to plan and build your own invention to a feminist analysis of the characters played by Academy-Award-winning actresses. On average, there were 13.3 discrete articles or columns comprising each e-zine. (This researcher did not consider hyperlinks to other web sites, or product information from the publisher/software company, as editorial content.) There were, on average, 1.3 articles about appearance, or 9.8 percent of editorial content; 0.33 articles on male-female relations and home life, respectively, or 2.5 percent of editorial content (each category); and 7.3 articles of self-development topics, or 54.9 percent of editorial content. Combination and "other" articles comprised, on average, 0.67 articles (5 percent of editorial content) and 3.3 articles (24.8 percent of editorial content), respectively. Individual results of the coding of the electronic magazines follow:

Group B: Electronic Magazines
Table 2: Content categories as a percent of total editorial

	Appearance	M-F Relatns	Home	Self Devlpmt	Combinatn	Other
Girls Intowire	33.3	0	0	66.7	0	0
Girl Tech	5.3	5.3	0	63.2	5.3	21.1
Her Online	11.1	0	5.6	44.4	5.6	33.3

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Taken as a group, the content analysis of Seventeen, Teen and YM correlates with previous studies by McRobbie, Peirce, Evans and Rutberg that have shown such magazines to be laden with stereotypical feminine ideals of attractiveness and dependence. These traditional socialization messages are clearly reflective of the dominant ideology that holds that adolescent and teen-age girls: 1) are dependent on others (typically boys/men) for their general welfare; 2) have little, if any, control over their own fates; 3) should be more concerned about their appearance than about their education; and 4) are limited to traditionally female-dominated professions, such as modeling or homemaking. These messages are largely driven by the powerful and pervasive economic influence of product advertisers (Evans 110). In Evans' study of teen magazines, "articles and advertisements mutually reinforced an underlying value that the road to happiness is attracting males for successful heterosexual life by way of physical beautification" (110).

In addition, mixed messages abounded in the three print magazines. A Seventeen feature on Toronto's Central Technical School, for example, discusses a young woman who is studying to be an auto mechanic and plans to open her own repair business (a non-stereotypical gender message). Yet the same article features a sidebar on fashion trends at Central Tech — essentially affording the issues of physical appearance and vocational education similar editorial importance. Even more disturbing were the conflicting sexual messages in these magazines. A single issue of YM featured a quiz in which girls were encouraged to ask themselves, "Are You Really Ready for Sex?" and an article on "How to NOT Get Pregnant," as well as a story on "How to Meet Guys, Guaranteed!," complete with "pick-up tips" and a "love map to the mall."

The humiliation experiences of young girls also were thematic of articles in YM and Teen, each of which chronicled (and, in this researcher's opinion, exploited) readers' descriptions of their most embarrassing moments. While these articles did not focus on physical appearance, they are just as revealing of the dominant ideology as the more typical fashion layouts and beauty tips. The message, in essence, is that appearance is of the

utmost importance — one must not only be pretty, but also never do or say anything that might draw undue attention to oneself.

Tucked away in the print magazines, between product advertisements for acne soaps and mini-skirts, were a few examples of editorial content which bucked the gender-stereotypical trend. While a whopping 60 percent of its total editorial content was devoted to articles about appearance or heterosexual relationships, Teen magazine also regularly features a half-page column called "In Your Own Words," which features readers' poems. Interestingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, one of the poems in Teen's February issue is entitled "Confusion."

Enter the e-zines

The e-zines surveyed in this study contrasted starkly with their print counterparts in the amount of editorial content dedicated to appearance, male-female relationships and other traditional socialization messages. In two of the three e-zines, more than 60 percent of the editorial content was devoted to self-development topics containing feminist messages of self-reliance, education, citizenship and empowerment. The third, Her Online, also proffered a significant amount of content (44.4 percent) geared toward these feminist ideals, while dedicating somewhat more editorial space to content categorized as "other," such as horoscopes and "chat rooms" (in which girls can communicate directly with each other online). Product advertising was limited to the publisher's own software games, and, unlike the advertisements in the print magazines, was easily avoided by readers who could simply choose not to click on the ads' electronic hyperlinks.

Produced by fledgling software manufacturers, the three e-zines demonstrated a number of atypical ways of involving girls in the larger global community. Girl Tech's site featured a section in which girls could write letters to foreign pen pals and have them translated to French, German or Spanish. In a special issue on Black History Month, Girls Interwire offered a link to the South African Women's Charter for Effective Equity;

mentions of Black History Month and its meaning, meanwhile, were negligible in the print magazines. Lastly, in a socially conscious twist on the traditional beauty/appearance article, Her Online offered its readers a chance to participate in a contest sponsored by Jane Cosmetics. The company polled readers on what they felt were the most pressing social issues of the day, then asked them to name a shade of makeup based on that theme. All the profits from the sale of the winning shade were to be donated to help that particular issue. One winning shade of mascara, "I Have a Gleam," benefited Artists Against Racism — a direct result of a reader's entry, and a powerful example of the kind of empowerment these sites offer adolescent and teen-age girls.

Each of the e-zines studied by this researcher encouraged its readers to respond to articles with their own opinions via e-mail. There is, perhaps, some level of profit motive on the part of commercial publishers in requesting this kind of feedback; essentially, it provides a way for the companies to informally research their markets by collecting feedback and demographic information from their audiences. Still, the two-way communication may serve a greater good by empowering girls to think critically about topics of interest to them and, simultaneously, to make their voices heard.

Conclusion

So what is the message of the medium? In the three top print magazines for young women, the message is clear: looking good in order to "catch" a boyfriend is the top requirement for a teen-age girl's identity and survival. In the mostly male world of the Internet, however, three commercially produced e-zines for adolescent girls offer a more feminist message — that individuals' opinions are important and that one can aspire to any kind of career one chooses (including motherhood). The Internet as the medium of choice for aspiring feminists seems clear. Still, Internet communication will continue to warrant close observance and further study by feminist researchers, particularly as commercial publishers find new ways to integrate product advertising into their editorial offerings.

Because this new mass medium is still in its infancy, future study will be necessary to track changes in content over time.

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